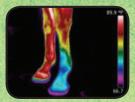


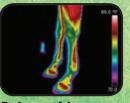
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Returning to the Ring Rehabbing the competitive dressage horse

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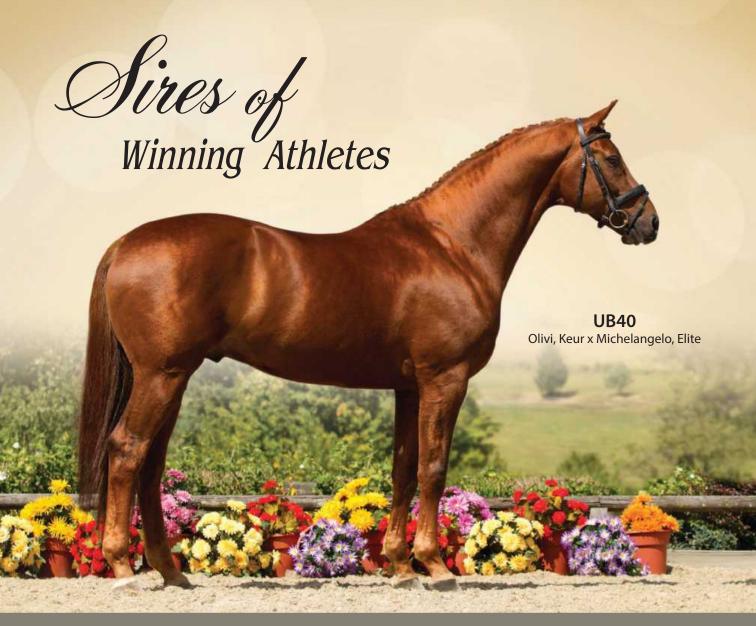














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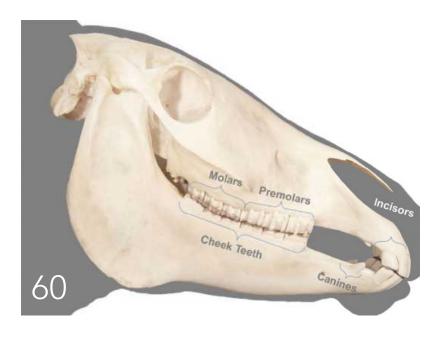
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inside dt

Training Healthy Athletes

n my years of horse ownership, I've seen my horses through various health issues, including sarcoid treatments, choke, an eye removal due to painful uveitis, seasonal allergies and joint injections for arthritis. If you own horses, you inevitably deal with health-related issues, which is why we decided to bring you an issue devoted to sport-horse health. This month's articles offer tips from experts who have experience in dealing with different health issues that can affect competitive dressage horses. We also look at ways to train our horses so that we promote soundness and prevent injuries from happening in the first place.

Our cover story comes from Canadian Olympian David Marcus, who discusses



the importance of a structured warm-up. "I prefer a very structured, systematic approach to my riding that begins with the warm-up," says Marcus. He makes the walk an important part of this time, saying that studies have shown that walking for 20 minutes reduces the chance of tendon and ligament injury in the horse. Read his story on p. 26.

After a proper warm-up, we need to continue to focus on the quality of our horse's gaits. In "Optimizing Your Horse's Soundness from the Saddle" (p. 36), *Dressage Today* Technical Editor Beth Baumert tells us that the best thing

we can do for our horse's health and longevity is to ride him in balance so he is free to move forward in rhythm, with suppleness, reaching for the bit—all without tension. "Help your horse to coordinate himself and your reward will be a healthy, sound, happy horse that has many useful years," says Baumert.

Keeping your horse sound may require work out of the saddle, too. On p. 42 we bring you an excerpt from Jim Masterson's latest book, *The Dressage Horse Optimized*, in which he explains how, through gentle and light manipulation of targeted release points and studied observation of the horse's responses, we can open doors to improved health and performance while enhancing communication along the way. And don't miss the Masterson Method pull-out chart between pages 48 and 49.

While preventing injury is certainly the goal, things can go wrong. In "Returning to the Ring," on p. 49, we hear from three riders, including dressage star Laura Graves, who has had first-hand experience bringing her horse, Verdades, back to competition after he broke his jaw in 2011. After months of rehab and patience on Graves' part, the pair went on to perform at the elite ranks of the sport.

There's much more in this issue, including an interesting piece on how correct dentistry can positively affect throughness (p. 60). If you have a moment, please let me know how this issue might have helped you and your partner.

Until next time,



Jennifer Mellace, Editor jmellace@aimmedia.com



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THE 2015 U.S. DRESSAGE **FESTIVAL OF CHAMPIONS**

'he top-ranked large- and small-tour combinations from across the country gathered at the Adequan Global Dressage Festival show grounds in Wellington, Florida, as the venue hosted the U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions, presented by the Dutta Corporation, for the first time this past December. After three rounds of intense competition in both the Grand Prix and Intermediaire I divisions, new champions were crowned and several competitors began their journeys to the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In the Intermediaire I division, a select group of eight horses and riders competed for the national-championship title including, hometown favorite Christina Vinios of Wellington with her 9-year-old Oldenburg gelding, Folkestone. The talented pair was already on a winning streak after claiming victory earlier in the season at the 2015 Markel/USEF Developing Horse Prix St. Georges National Championship and sweeping all three CDI small-tour classes at Dressage at Devon last September. As competition got under way, Vinios and Folkestone did not disappoint, earning an early lead with a winning score of 70.632 percent in the first day's Prix St. Georges

test. But they then had to fend off challenges by Jane Karol aboard Sunshine Tour in the Intermediaire I and Shelly Francis with Rubinio in the Freestyle to remain on top of the overall leaderboard with 69.799 percent and earn another 2015 national title in their very first Festival of Champions appearance. "I've had a lot of fun with my horse this year, so to end it this way is amazing. I was so excited to just come here and compete," said Vinios, who admitted that the pressure of competition at the Festival was high. "At the Developing Horse Championships I was in second after the first day, and I was sitting next to high-performance rider Heather Blitz and she said something like, 'If you win the first day, you can't relax too much on the second day because you'll make a mistake.' I remembered her saying that and told myself, I really have to step it up the second day, but I did the opposite. It was so close. Any of the three of us could have won. It was intense, but it was really fun. I loved it!"

All eyes, both in person and via online livestreaming from the USEF Network, were on the 17 horse-and-rider combinations in the Grand Prix division for a preview of who is expected to be a member of next summer's Olympic team. Perennial U.S. team anchor Steffen Peters of San Diego, California, returned to this year's Festival of Champions in a quest to defend his 2014 National Grand Prix title with Four Winds Farm's 13-year-old Westphalian gelding, Legolas 92. But Peters' week didn't start off as he had hoped as key mistakes in the first day's Grand Prix test left the 2015 Pan American Games individual

gold medalist chasing his U.S. teammate and last year's reserve national champion Laura Graves of Plymouth, Florida, and Verdades. It was a lead Graves and her electric KWPN gelding would never relinquish, even as Peters continued the hunt in the Grand Prix Special, where he placed second with his rising star Rosamunde (the first time the young mare has bested her stablemate in head-tohead competition) and earned a redemptive and triumphant victory in front of a full crowd for the final evening's freestyle with Legolas. "I think it was one of his best freestyles," said Peters, who laughingly added, "It was very kind of Laura

Laura Graves and her 13-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding, Verdades, at the 2015 Festival of Champions







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to give me one blue ribbon from these three days. That's what teammates are for. It's great." Even though Graves and Verdades are already U.S. team veterans and are ranked among the top 15 in the world, their start-to-finish lead and overall winning average of 76.531 percent earned the pair their very first national title. "It's incredible. To win my first national championship...I've never even been close to this position, and it's a real honor. This is a really encouraging place for me to start 2016," explained Graves. "My horse is just phenomenal. He's still so fun to ride and is an amazingly athletic horse. When he goes like he did this week, the feeling is just unreal." On her way to pursuing a possible Olympic team berth, Graves noted her next goal is the 2016 Reem Acra FEI World Cup Dressage Finals in Sweden in March. Complete results and video from the Grand Prix and Intermediaire I divisions of the U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions are available at usefnetwork.com. — Jennifer M. Keeler

DRESSAGE TWEET OF THE MONTH

Every moment I am sitting on my horse's back I am teaching him something and the warm-up is no different.

— David Marcus





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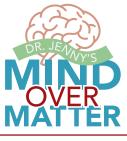
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MATTER THE WARM-UP: COMBINING MIND, BODY SPIRIT

ne-third of your ride is warm-up. That's a pretty significant portion if you think about it. This month's issue provides some important points to think about with regard to warming up your horse physically—but how much mental energy do you apply to your warm-up sessions? Warm-up and warm-down are essential parts of every training or competition ride, and I think their importance is not emphasized enough. I am not a lifelong equestrian and when I came to the dressage world after a highly competitive swimming career as a national team member, I was very surprised at the lack of focus on the warm-up and sometimes a lack entirely of warm-down. My swim coaches would scold us for talking during warm-up because we needed to be focusing on our bodies' needs each day. These amazing horses that give us so much need to be treated as athletes just as we do. Think about it: If you feel physically off, how well do you focus, perform and behave? Warm-up is where this starts and I want you to start to think about your warm-up.

From a performance perspective, warm-up is key. It sets the tone for the session and is a time to create and prepare. It is a daily opportunity to be present, to feel your horse's body, to develop a pattern for knowing your horse and to prepare for the day—whether it is a hack, a training ride or a competition. Your warm-up alerts you to how good you and your horse feel—or not. This gives you the opportunity to adjust your ride and your daily goals, setting both you and your horse up for a winning ride. You won't always feel good and neither will your horse, so having strategies for both scenarios creates a better partnership and greater success.

I give clinics all over the country and find that we don't put enough men-



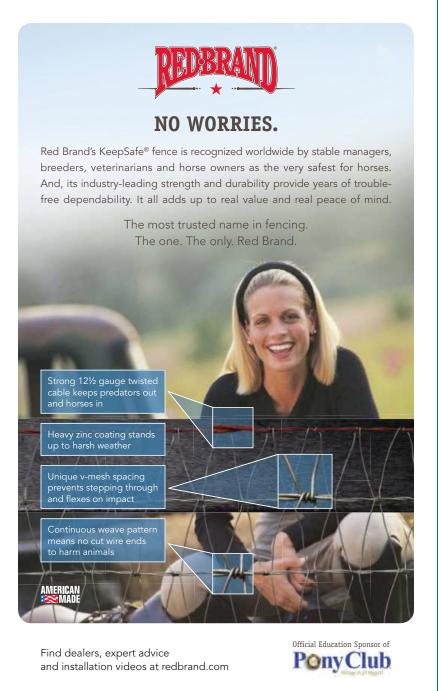
Jenny Susser has a doctoral degree and is licensed in clinical health psychology, specializing in sport psychology. A four-year all-American swimmer at UCLA, she swam on two national teams and at the 1988 Olympic Trials. She has worked with athletes of all sports and ages—collegiate, professional, international and amateur. She was the sport psychologist for the 2010 WEG South African Para-Dressage Team and the 2012 U.S. Olympic Dressage Team. Dr. Jenny is also a performance coach with Human Performance.

tal energy into our warm-up. It is more like a to-do list with things to check off before we get to the good stuff. But what if you started your ride when you actually started your ride? We take for granted that our horses need to trot around a bit before we can work them, but what if you began to connect with your horse during your warm-up? Many horses trot around mindlessly during the warm-up because we are mindless during the warm-up, and when we transition to work mode, our horse still isn't present or connected. I hear trainers yell "wake him up," all the time and the jolt that follows isn't always fair to our horses. We should be using our warm-up sessions to allow our horse's body and mind to ease into the work, to get blood flow to all those giant muscles and connective tissues and to get us both on the same page for the session so that by the end of the warm-up, we are both awake.

It's funny how much our rides influence our day. A good session with our horses will make the day glow and a bad one can certainly ruin it. Knowing this, we can easily work to create that magical connection mentally, emotionally and even spiritually with our horse during the first minutes of the ride.

When we bring our horse on board mentally with us, he performs better. But it has to start with us. Think about your ride and your daily goals before getting on and then use that to shape and guide your warm-up mentally as well as physically. You will be amazed at the difference this simple adjustment will make in your rides and the connection with your horse.





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Promoting Healthy Joints Through the Levels

By Jessica Morgan, DVM

hen your horse's joints become stressed or diseased, you might hear your veterinarian talk about osteoarthritis (OA) or degenerative joint disease (DJD). Simply put, OA and DJD, in the natural progression of the disease process, are the degeneration of the cartilage and the synovial membrane, creating synovitis and bone remodeling. In the athletic horse, this degeneration of the cartilage is caused by reactive forces on the joint from the interaction of the horse's conformation and the ground surface he is working on. It can also be caused

by a traumatic wound incident involving the joint. But for our purposes, let's focus on keeping joints healthy in the long run. Horses of any age can be affected by this issue, but you should be considerate of weight management, shoeing intervals and genetic predisposition.

The biggest factor in how the athletic horse is going to handle stress placed on his joints relies on a detailed conditioning program and correct riding. I find that horses who are conditioned to work on many different types of ground surfaces seem to have less joint trouble. Single-surface horses tend to have fairly predictable and specific injuries.

Horses are meant to move around constantly, not just for an hour each day. The more a horse walks in a day, the better. It's the long, slow movements that will benefit your horse's soft tissue and joint structures. If you are not getting 9s and 10s in your walk work, this is your opportunity to think about what you can do to improve the walk and help condition your horse's joints, too. For example, when people see human physical therapists for injury, the work is slow, correct and deliberate. Your riding should be the same.

How does OA begin? Hard or deep footing, lack of traction, ligament strain, hyperextension or taking a bad step can contribute to the inflammatory cascade that produces synovitis. Clinically, we may observe a range of signs, from reluctance to perform, joint filling or puffiness (joint effusion) to overt lameness.

Basic preventive action begins with intimately knowing all the bumps and blemishes on your horse's legs and noticing when one of them changes. For acute joint filling, icing is highly effective in 20-minute cycles up to several times a day. Support-bandaging after icing coupled with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) will

keep a small problem from turning into a more chronic problem. Early detection does matter.

You can spend a lot of money on radiographs, ultrasounds, MRIs or CT scans, but most cases of OA can be diagnosed with a good static examination. This includes a thorough history of what has transpired, palpation and motion examination that leads to diagnostic analgesia, or blocking the joint with a numbing agent to confirm that the joint is actually contributing to the lameness. As the saying goes, we don't ride radio-



Most cases of osteroarthritis can be diagnosed with a good static examination.

graphs. We ride horses who may have abnormalities on radiographs that do not cause issues. Joint blocks provide a high level of confidence in determining a specific diagnosis.

Unfortunately, there are no significant clinical signs that point to one joint. Any joint with dysfunction can cause similar clinical signs. If you are still wondering about a clicking sound within a joint, it comes from fluid movement/displacement within the joint and may not necessarily be a problem. Don't forget that joints in the vertebral column can undergo primary joint degeneration and cause significant pain. I typically rule out and treat all limb lameness, then investigate the neck, back and pelvis when dealing with multiple joints.

Medical treatments start with NSAIDS

as needed, such as phenylbutasone, flunixin meglumine (Banamine) or firocoxib (Equiox). All of these medications can cause ulcerations in the mouth, stomach or hindgut, and in my opinion, one is not better than the other. With your veterinarian as a guide, start with the recommended amount then try to reduce to the smallest amount that makes a difference. You should be concerned if it takes long-term daily NSAIDs to allow your horse to do his job. Be sure to talk to your veterinarian.

Joint injection with various combinations of steroids and hyaluronic acid is an effective treatment for effusive and painful joints that have been proven to be causing an issue by utilizing joint blocks. Regenerative therapies like stem cells, PRP and IRAP can work, too. We don't know which treatment is best yet,

but we are getting closer.

The main issue with supplements is that they are not controlled or regulated substances. A good way to know what you are getting is to use supplements that have been evaluated by the National Animal Supplement Council or a consumer lab. It's the closest thing to having FDA approval. They evaluate claims and make sure the product contains what it promotes. They provide integrity and consistency in a very confusing market. You should also know that cost does not equate to efficacy. Just because you spend more doesn't mean the supplement will do more.

Absorption of a supplement and its entry into the joint of the horse is the biggest question. There are a few ingredients we know that are absorbed orally and have been found to prevent

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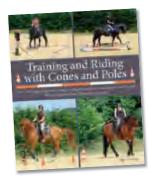


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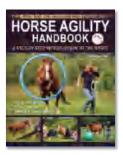
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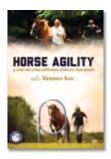


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and improve lameness using the racing Thoroughbred as a model. An oral glycosaminoglycan called hyaluronic acid is one of them. The studies on avocado's, soy's and omega 3's effect on inflammation are also very promising.

Intramuscular injectables, such as Adequan and Pentosan, are for cartilage repair and maintenance. The labeled dose is every four days for a series of injections. Many horses receive injections in a much longer interval and, therefore, may not be getting the full benefit the owner believes they are providing. Legend is a mid-range molecular-weight hyaluronic acid. Truthfully, we are not sure how it really works as it does not have a long-term effect (2 to 4 days) but it is very effective when

there is an acute synovitis. I tend to believe that if Legend is working, oral hyaluronic acid will work, too, and not require the injections.

A new trend is administering intravenous biphosphonates, such as Tildren or Osphos. They are useful for bone edema or when osteoarthritis is advanced. They provide bone-pain relief by inhibiting osteoclasts. It can be a very effective treatment when used appropriately.

For the long haul, while you are moving through the levels with your horse, keep a detailed calendar of how your horse is doing, what his exercise level is and the response to different treatments that you have tried. The basic fundamentals of horsemanship and

ice will go a long way in the prevention of osteoarthritis.

> Jessica Morgan, DVM, is an equine lameness diagnostics veterinarian at Morgan Equine Veterinary & Farrier Hospital in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. She and her husband, Dallas Morgan, CJF, are focused on equine lameness diagnostics, current lameness therapeutics and farriery for performance horses. They are amateur eventers who take their work in the dressage court very seriously. Jessica has a Westphalian mare who excels in the dressage phase and Dallas rides a Thoroughbred named Dave.



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Susanne von Dietze is a leader in equestrian biomechanics. A physiotherapist, licensed Trainer A instructor and judge for dressage and show jumping, she gives lectures and seminars throughout the world, including at the prestigious German Riding Academy in Warendorf. She is a native of Germany and now lives with her husband and three children in Israel, where she competes at the international level. She is the author of two books on the biomechanics of riding: Balance in Movement and Horse and Rider, Back to Back. Find her books at HorseBooksEtc.com.



Free Your Horse's Shoulders

The picture shows Wendy Malek on her 5-year-old Azteca mare, Bloo. Wendy wrote that Bloo had been a rescue horse as a yearling and has now turned into a wonderful partner for her. They are showing Training Level and are schooling First Level, just starting to work on lengthenings. This picture was taken at their second show, and Wendy said that her biggest challenge right now is to keep Bloo from curling behind the bit.

At the moment this photo was taken, Bloo is in the landing phase of the left-canter stride, and one can see that she is reaching with her hind leg well under the rider's weight. Her shoulders appear a little heavy. Specifically, her inside shoulder and front leg appear a little tense and not reaching out as free and forward as I would like to see

in this phase of the canter stride. Bloo's nose-line is a bit behind the vertical. The expression on her face is not relaxed and I also notice more tension in her lower neck muscles, with her slightly open mouth and her ears a bit too far back for her to be considered relaxed and concentrated, listening to the rider.

I can tell that Wendy wants to follow her horse's movement and is attempting to sit lightly. But her seat does reveal some tension and discomfort: her hips are tight and this causes her lower legs to turn too far outside, preventing a springy elasticity from her hips to her heels during the canter stride. Looking at her left hand, I notice that her wrist is curled inward and her hand is positioned farther back than what is ideal.

In this phase of the canter stride, Bloo needs to open and stretch her neck more forward. In walk and canter, the horse's neck has a natural forward-nodding movement, which the rider's hands need to follow. If you watch racehorses in action,

the jockeys' hands perform a forward movement, known as "strapping," to encourage the horse to reach out further with the front legs and cover more ground, especially across the finish line.

To understand how much the hand movement of the rider is connected to the freedom of the horse's shoulders, try this: In canter, take up a comfortable forward position or jumping seat. Place your hands in the middle of your horse's neck (between the horse's ears and the saddle) and keep them there during the canter strides. Your hands should not move and should maintain an even pressure or weight on your horse's neck. To be able to do this, you will notice that your elbows and shoulders need to allow for more movement in every canter stride. You should be able to clearly feel that you need forward freedom in your arms that begins in your shoulders and continues down through the slight stretching of your elbows when your horse reaches out with his forehand. When you return to your dressage seat, you should still be able to feel this same sensation even if it becomes less visible. An image that helps to illustrate this is to think of the rider and horse each as a ball stacked one on top of the other, with the rider as a slightly smaller ball.

If Wendy can imagine herself being



Wendy Malek rides her 5-year-old Azteca mare, Bloo, at Training and First Levels.

Counces

the top ball on top of a round canter stride, she will find it easier to sit deeper and lengthen her back. This will allow her pelvis to relax and follow the horse's back movement better. Her hips then can become more free. With a more stable and balanced seat, she will then be able to give her inside hand forward during the canter stride and this will allow Bloo to reach out more with her shoulder and carry her nose farther in front.

For another helpful exercise, try this: Close your eyes for a few canter strides, concentrating fully on the amount of contact you feel in your hands. This contact should remain steady and equal during the whole stride, including the takeoff and landing. This is only possible when you perform a forward movement with your hands. If your hand stays fixed in place, your horse will, in every landing, jump into the rein. Wendy will most likely feel this as a stronger contact, and this will shorten Bloos' stride, especially when she hits the contact with the inside rein, which can cause her to curl up more. This tendency will also become more exaggerated in the lengthenings.

I hope that these tips will help Wendy deepen her partnership with her nice young horse.

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STRUCTURE

A Canadian Olympian explains the three musthaves for a purposeful start to your horse's work session.

By David Marcus with Hilary Moore Hebert Photos by Susan J. Stickle

often teach clinics where I am asked, "Do you mind if I come into the arena a few minutes prior to my lesson to warm up?" "Sure," I say, only to see the rider trotting and cantering around on a long rein with absolutely no control. Her (or his) thought process is generally that she wants to allow her horse time to warm up his joints and muscles. However, her horse is thinking, Here I am, running around with my head wherever I want and at whatever speed I want, and then he feels confused when she says, "Now, I want to put you together like a show horse," and he doesn't like the new set of rules. It is like having a kid without a curfew suddenly getting one: He is bound to argue.

For this reason, I prefer a very structured, systematic approach to my riding that begins with the warm-up. From green to Grand Prix, it is about knowing I can do three things: 1. Check and train my horse's reactions to my seat, leg and rein. 2. Check and train my ability to regulate the length of my horse's stride, and 3. check and train my ability to control his overall shape.

As you can see, I don't just use the warm-up to give my horse time for his muscles and joints to literally warm up.





Studies show that walking for 20 minutes reduces the chance of tendon and ligament injury. Therefore, I make this an important part of my warm-up. Here, I ride the walk with Don Kontes, owned by Deborah Kinzinger Miculinic.

Every moment I am sitting on my horse's back I am teaching him something, and the warm-up is no different. The work has to be directly relatable to his training. I want to have a set of rules that apply to where I want the rest of my ride to go. These three variables may be the whole focus when working a green horse. While on a Grand Prix horse, like my 2012 Olympic partner Chrevi's Capital, it might take only the first five or 10 minutes of our ride.

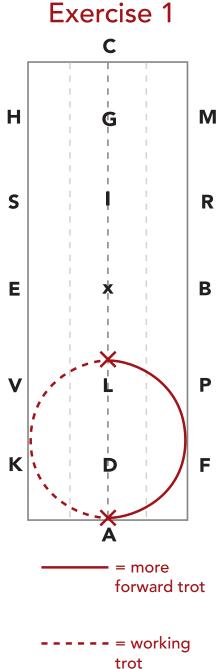
Here is how I ride a warm-up with purpose to improve my horse's reaction time, stride length and overall shape.

Reaction Time

Once I have walked on a long rein for 20 minutes, I start in trot. Studies have shown that walking for 20 minutes reduces the chance of tendon and ligament injury. For this reason, I make this an important part of my warm-up. I then start in a relaxed working trot rising. I ride long and low in both directions, making sure my horse is flexible and reaching forward toward the bit.

I start to work my horse with transitions within the gait on large 20-meter circles and long, straight lines. The goal at this point is to find the rhythmic, harmonious version of my horse.

As we are all aware, the first step of the Training Scale is rhythm. However, we cannot control the rhythm until we can control our horse's reactions. Here is an exercise that I would do to make certain he is moving forward on his own



with an immediate answer to the tiniest of aids.

Exercise 1-20-meter Circle in Rising Trot, Forward and Back

This is an exercise I would do on any horse, from green to Grand Prix. By riding alternating half circles of forward

and working trot, I check my horse's reaction time to the transition aids. I prefer this exercise to riding quick transitions of a few steps because I think those can often create tension, and that is never my intention.

At this point, it is not necessary to ride a true lengthening/extended trot in this exercise. The goal is to create the reaction to my aids by the way I engage my horse in a more forward trot from the leg. I make sure that I then reward him and repeat the exercise.

Here is how to ride a 20-meter circle in rising trot at either end of the arena, for example, at A:

- 1. Ride the first half of the circle with a more forward trot, from A to centerline.
- 2. Ride the second half of the circle, from the centerline to A, in a more working trot.

My focus is on the quickness of my horse's reaction to my aids—both "go" and "whoa"—at A and centerline. At A, I ask for the more forward trot. My expectation would be to get a reaction equal to my aid. If I feel this has happened, I immediately reward his response with either a soft pat of my inside hand or a gentle "good" with my voice.

Once I approach the centerline, I ask my horse to return to a normal working trot by closing my outside rein, squeezing softly with my knees and relaxing in my body. I maintain the working trot for another half of the circle until I approach A again.

If my horse did not immediately react to the smallest of aids the first time we were at A, I repeat the exercise. This time when I get to A, I ask for a quicker reaction by increasing the volume of my leg aids. It is important to note that after I've done this, I always repeat the transition the next time around with the smallest of aids to check his response as a result of the training from this increased aid.





Riding forward and back on a 20-meter circle can be done in trot as well as in canter. In canter, I use my outside leg to go more forward (A) and I use both of my upper legs when asking the horse to come back (B).



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I repeat this exercise until I have created a horse who is reacting immediately to my aids. Then I can change direction and repeat the circle exercise on the other rein.

Tips for the exercise: I always make sure to pay attention to my geometry so I am aware of where my horse's body is under me and how he is reacting to my aids as I apply them to transition, turn or rebalance. When I am committed to a certain circle and my horse is suddenly off that line, it heightens my awareness of where he is (or is not) under my body.

I also pay attention to maintaining the same energy throughout so my horse has the same desire to go forward in the working-trot portion of the exercise. I want my horse to stay in front of my leg throughout. That means my horse has the desire to go forward on his own even on the slower side.

I think it is also important to note that this exercise can be done in both trot and canter. My expectations will remain the same in both gaits, however the use of my leg will be different. I use my lower leg to go forward, specifically my inside leg in trot and my outside leg in canter. I use both of my upper legs to slow my horse in trot and canter.

Exercise 2—Leg Yield From the Diagonal

For an upper-level horse, I might also add the test of leg-yielding in the warm-up. Riding the leg yield from the diagonal is a great exercise for any horse confirmed in the movement. I would not use this exercise to teach leg yield. It's a test to check balance, straightness and suppleness.

- 1. Go across the diagonal in rising trot, M–X–K.
- 2. At X, turn that diagonal into a leg yield right from X–K.
- 3. Make sure your horse is parallel to the long side in the leg yield.

4. At K, straighten your horse for a stride before bending through the corner and then proceed straight on the short side.

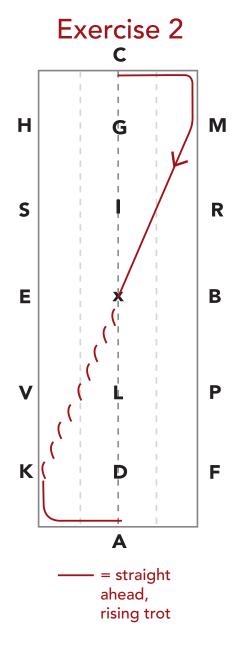
I like to do this exercise because I find that it is a more gymnastic exercise to go from the right rein to the leg yield right in the left flexion than from the right rein to the leg yield left in right flexion. At X I would change my posting diagonal so that my new inside leg is naturally coming on the horse as I am asking him to step sideways into the new direction. The horse doesn't anticipate the pattern of this exercise because it is not typically practiced. As a result, it is a truer representation of the honesty of his reactions than doing the leg yield in a place in the arena that your horse may anticipate.

How many times I repeat this exercise is related to how easy it is for that horse. If I can do this exercise very smoothly the first time, where the only thing that changes is the orientation of his body, I will move on to the other rein and repeat the exercise. If not, I will repeat the same exercise until I feel secure in the ease of the movement.

Troubleshooting: The common things that go wrong with this exercise are generally related to the hotness or laziness of my horse.

On a hotter horse, I like the exercise because as I turn the diagonal into a leg yield right, the horse will have an easier time going parallel as he is quick off the leg aid. However, it is common that he will run through my new outside rein. In this instance, I check that he is responsive to my slowing aids and outside rein throughout the exercise. If necessary, I will even add a transition to walk and back to trot while maintaining the leg yield.

A lazy horse will not commonly run through my outside rein, but will possibly lose energy in his hind end as we go into the leg yield, making it harder to



(= leg yield, rising trot

maintain the horse's body in a position parallel to the long side. In that case, I spend more time on the second half of the diagonal, making sure to create the parallel-to-the-long-side aspect by getting a reaction to my leg-yielding aids while maintaining my focus on his forward desire.

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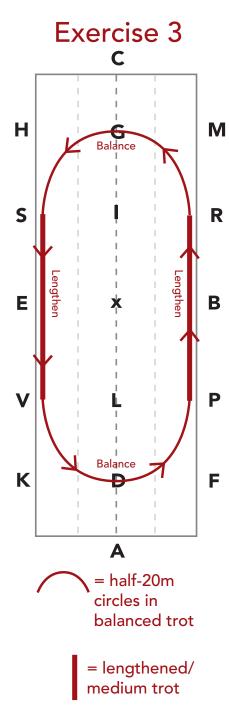
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Stride Length

Now that I have a horse who is reacting immediately to the smallest of aids, it's time for me to move on to the next exercise that will help me manage the length of my horse's stride. An impor-

tant thing to think about during this phase of the warm-up is to avoid losing the quality I have created in getting immediate reactions to minimal aids.

Now that I have control of my horse's reaction to the aids and he has a desire to move forward, I can work on developing his stride length. Here is how.

Exercise 3—Transitions Into and Out of Lengthened/Medium Trot

This exercise is going to be a variation on Exercise 1 with the focus being on the quality of the gait as opposed to the reaction time to my aids. The goal is to maintain balance and rhythm as I transition from a working trot to a lengthened or medium trot in order to create adjustability in my horse's stride length.

I begin on a 20-meter half circle in working trot as I did in Exercise 1. But this time I go between working trot and lengthened trot, utilizing the long side to develop scope and quality in medium trot. In Exercise 1, I was more concerned with reaction time. But with this exercise, opening it up to an oval, I allow my horse to successfully achieve correct rhythm and balance. I may go straight for half the long side or my horse may require use of the full arena. For instance,

- 1. Begin in rising trot, on the left rein.
- 2. Ride a 20-meter half-circle from R to S in a balanced trot.
- 3. Ride from S to V in a lengthened or medium trot.
- 4. Repeat the balanced trot on a 20-meter half-circle from V to P
- 5. Ride from P to R in a lengthened or medium trot.

With time, I will be able to take a horse that can stay balanced on the larger ovals back onto the 20-meter circle without losing quality. Only then is the 20-meter circle appropriate for the exercise.

Once I take a walk break, I might repeat the exercise in canter. My approach

in the canter for the lower-level horse is the same as in trot. I find what approach makes the horse comfortable. For upperlevel horses in the canter, I also ride in a working gait with the same idea of comfort, but with more connection to the bridle and focus on uphill balance.

Body Shape

At this point, I allow myself to be mindful of my horse's body shape and the way he is carrying his neck. Through quickening his reaction time and adjusting his stride length, I can now become more aware of how his frame can be affected.

Oftentimes, we fear the topic of controlling the neck because it is such a taboo topic. However, I need to be able to control my horse's outline and neck shape. I need to be able to adjust the height of his neck from where I would want the poll in the show ring (see Photo A, p. 34) to where I would want it in the stretching trot (see Photo B, p. 34). What is important to remember is that correct neck control is not about pulling a horse's head down into a frame. Instead, the ability to correctly control the height of the neck is directly related to the horse's correct response to the aids, impulsion and adjustability of the stride. For that reason, I have saved it as my last topic.

No one exercise fits every horse to develop adjustability in neck height. Every horse's conformation is different and this plays such a big part in my ability to give you concrete guidelines. For this reason, the focus must be different depending on the horse and instead of one clear exercise, I focus on remembering these five tips:

- 1. The horse should always be reaching to the bridle from active hind legs over a supple back, no matter his neck height.
- 2. The highest a horse's poll should go is the frame you would see in a show frame for the level he is working.

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I need to be able to adjust the height of Don Altena's neck from where I would want his poll in the show ring (A) to where I would want it in the stretching trot (B). The ability to correctly control the height of the neck is directly related to the horse's correct response to the aids, impulsion and adjustability of the stride.

- The poll can go as low as you'd like as long as your horse continues to reach forward toward the bit and it is not maintained for long periods of time.
- 4. The ability to control the neck is a direct reflection of how a horse is using his hind legs and back. If you do not have the ability to raise or lower his neck, first check that he is active enough behind—the slow hind leg can create a hollow back and, thus, no ability to control the neck.
- 5. In general, if a horse wants to maintain a very high head and neck carriage, work to lower the neck, and if a horse wants to maintain a very low head and neck carriage, work to raise the neck.

After riding through all of these exercises and focusing on these variables, I should now have a horse who is truly reactive to my aids, truly in front of my leg, giving me the ability to harmoniously control the length of his stride and the shape of his neck. Only now am I ready to start the training portion of my ride. Sometimes I spend the whole ride or lesson on something considered a warm-up variable, but the goal should and must always be to get the quality first.

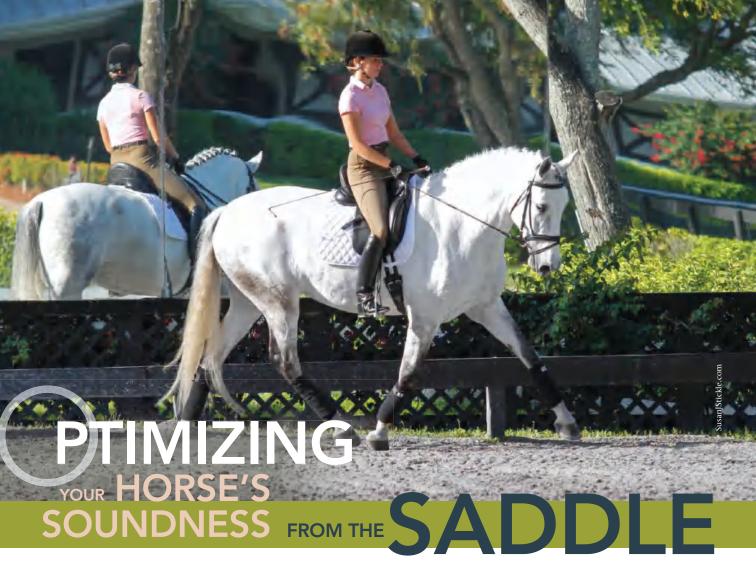
David Marcus is among North
America's top dressage competitors.
He and Chrevi's Capital represented
Canada at the 2012 Olympic Games
and 2014 Alltech FEI World Equestrian
Games. A dual citizen of the U.S. and
Canada, Marcus is a well-respected
trainer who has helped students of
all levels meet their goals. He and
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The key to a horse's longevity is riding him in balance.

By Beth Baumert

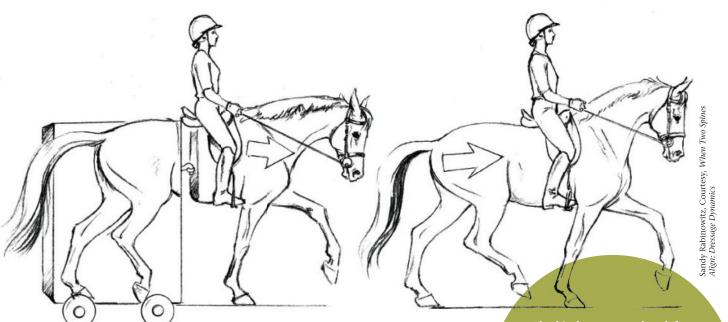
ressage horses often live long, healthy lives—especially when ridden by riders who have a feel for balance. In fact, the best thing you can do for your horse's health and longevity is to ride him in a way that's friendly to his body—in a way that makes him stronger instead of stressing him out. That means riding him in balance because tension and stress are inevitable when your horse is out of balance. When in balance, your horse is free to move forward in rhythm, with suppleness, reaching for the bit—all without tension.

Horses have a few innate balance issues even without the weight of a rider, and the successful rider is always managing those issues. Two of the balance issues are longitudinal, or back to front.

Mica Mabragana and Infanta HFG demonstrate how a horse ridden in balance is free to move forward in rhythm, with suppleness, reaching for the bit—all without tension.

Back-to-Front Balance Issues

First, the horse by nature is inclined to be more eager with the forehand than the hindquarters. As a result, the forehand and the hindquarters aren't always coordinated with one another. When you ask your horse to do an upward transition from halt to walk, walk to trot or trot to canter, what happens? Does your horse give you a whole-bodied response in the upward transition or is he inclined to initiate movement with just his front end? If you're like most, your horse moves off with the front end and he is fairly unconscious about his hind



end so it drags behind him as if it were a trailer behind the pulling front end. In fact, we can think of the front end as the "pulling engine" and the hind end as the "pushing engine."

When the pulling engine is dominant in the moment of any upward transition, the horse covers a little more ground with the front end than with the hind end. As a direct result, the horse gets a bit long in the frame, hollow in the back (with the shoulders down) and sometimes unpleasant in the hand. When the hindquarters are the driving force, causing the horse to cover ground, it has the effect of lifting the forehand.

Likewise, check out your horse's downward transitions. When going from canter to trot, trot to walk or walk to halt, what stops first? Often it is the hind end that quits as the front end keeps going. The result is the same sprawled horse that is hollow and tense in the back, on the forehand and unpleasant in the hand.

Of course, the horse has an even more basic balance issue: He is innately built on the forehand because his relatively large head and neck protrude off an otherwise table-like structure.

All horses have these problems, so the question is: When your horse looks like some variation of the horse on the

left in the above drawing, what can you do to make him look like the horse on the right?

The Solution

Half halts and transitions are the rider's primary tools to improve the balance of the horse. With these tools, you will gently and persistently teach your horse to respond with his back and hindquarters to your seat and leg aids. He shouldn't respond with his front end first. You want his forehand to relax and wait a second so your horse doesn't sprawl onto the forehand and you want your horse's hind legs to work more eagerly with you.

But how do you want your horse's hindquarters to work with you? It helps to be specific about what you want. Let's look at the three things your horse's hind leg does (see drawings on page 38):

- 1. It thrusts (off the ground),
- 2. then it reaches (ideally under your center of gravity),
- 3. and finally it engages or carries weight appropriately for his training and strength.

Decide what you want from your horse's hindquarters. If you need more power, then you need more thrust. If the power is making your horse stiff, you need less thrust. If he pops his hindquarters off the ground or becomes crooked

The hindquarters, when left to their own devices, sometimes act like a trailer being dragged by the forehand. When the hindquarters are the driving force, causing the horse to cover ground, it has the effect of lifting the forehand.

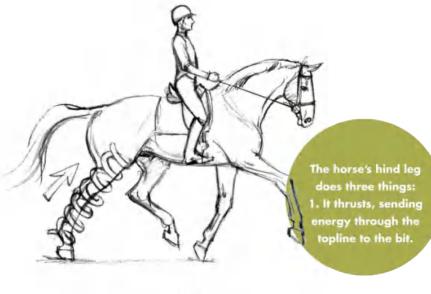
behind the saddle, he is avoiding engagement. If he is crooked, you also need to refine the reach. Maybe you don't necessarily want more reach, but you want him to reach to a specific place—under your center of gravity, instead of to the side. We'll talk more about reach in the section "Lateral Issues" on page 41.

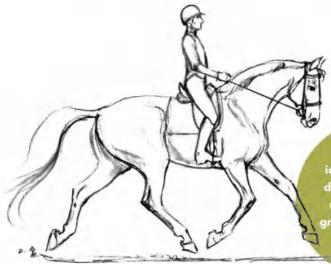
As I said, transitions and half halts help your horse's coordination and balance. Let's look at how each works.

Half Halts

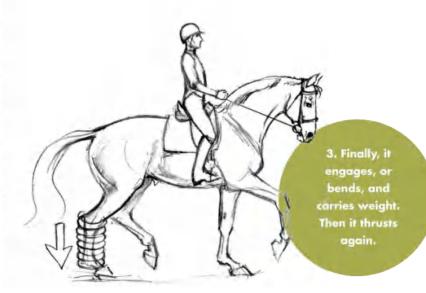
Half halts balance your horse by helping him wait with his forehand and work more specifically with the hindquarters. The half halt is sometimes not understood clearly because it can mean so many different things. For example, it can mean:

- Balance under me in shoulder-fore right.
- Balance under me in preparation for





2. It reaches, ideally to a place directly under the rider's center of ravity, where two spines meet,



an extension.

- Balance under me in the shape of a 10-meter bend left.
- Balance under me before this change of direction.
- Balance under me in preparation to jump this fence.

And we could go on and on. A half halt means countless things, but it always means "balance under me" by waiting with the forehand and getting the hindquarters in a position to carry. The balance is best when the center of gravity of the rider is directly over the center of gravity of the horse and the horse steps with his inside hind foot directly under that point.

Contrary to the mystifying reputation of half halts, anyone can do them. It's true that the more experience you have, the more successful they will be, but the sooner you start, the better. Check out the sidebar "How to do a Half Halt" on page 40. Then try Exercise 2 on page 39 to improve your half halts.

Transitions

Transitions, like half halts, also ask your horse to "balance under me." But, doing transitions with your horse might not help him much unless you understand why you are doing them and you are looking for the desired result. Here's what you want to happen:

- When downward transitions are successful, they give you the same result as the "whoa" portion of the half halt: They close the horse's frame from behind and connect the rein aid to the hindquarters. Sometimes they also transfer weight from the front to the back. Downward transitions teach your horse to wait with the forehand and engage (by carrying weight appropriate to his level of strength and training) the hindquarters.
- Upward transitions teach your horse to thrust and reach with the inside hind leg under your center

How to Do a Half Halt

he rider's half halt has three parts: Go, whoa and soften. These three parts ideally synchronize with the motion of the horse within each stride.

Go. The "go" part of your half halt is associated with the moment when your horse thrusts and reaches with his inside hind leg (see drawings on page 38). Be sure that you feel the result of his thrust in your hand as your horse is stepping toward the bit and in front of your leg. He must reach for the bit, or the half halt can't do its job of connecting the horse from front to back—and during the next phase, from back to front. My favorite image of this reaching from back to front is expressed in the illustration below from judge Janet Foy's notion of the horse's commitment to the bit. She says the energy from the hind legs, flowing through the horse's topline, should reach the poll and "turn on the light." When the horse is in front of the leg and going ideally, this imaginary light won't flicker and threaten to go out during half halts. In other words, you should be able to half halt without compromising your horse's commitment to the bit. When your horse reaches for the bit, he doesn't simply draw on your hands. Rather, he draws on your seat and back and deepens your entire vertical self, which enables the next phase of the half halt.

Whoa. The "whoa" part of your half halt is associated with the horse's engaging moment, when one of your horse's hind legs is bent and his hoof is flat on the ground, carrying weight. This is the only moment when you can improve your horse's balance by shifting more weight

behind. The rein aid connects to the hindquarters and the weight shifts from the forehand to the hind leg that is on the ground. Here are the aids for the whoa portion of the half halt:

Your hands normally should follow your horse's mouth in motion. During the brief whoa moment of the half halt, your reins stop following and, at the same time, your seat and leg close to ask the horse to come under behind. As a result, the weight from the forehand transfers to the hind leg that is on the ground. That hind leg is ideally stepping right underneath the rider's seat. At the lower levels your half halt may only make a connection between the bit and your horse's hindquarters, but later in your horse's training you want to shift weight to the hindquarters, which will collect your horse. If your horse's imaginary light bulb is flickering or threatening to go out, the whoa portion of your half halt needs more leg—or perhaps your hand has inadvertently come back. When used correctly, these aids don't shorten the neck (which is a common problem resulting from too much rein aid); rather they close the horse's frame by shortening his body behind the saddle.

Soften. Finally, all of your aids soften. This softening doesn't mean your aids turn to slack relaxation that abandons the horse. Rather, all the rider's aids, for a moment, give the horse breathing room. The rider's position maintains its tone and its ability to channel the horse's energy and perpetuate the horse's motion in rhythm. The soften re-invites the go (thrust) of the next stride.





During the brief whog moment of the half halt, your reins stop following and, at the same time, your seat and leg close to ask the horse to come under behind. Annie Morris demonstrates this on her Lusitano stallion, Telurico, and he responds by bringing his hind legs under and he keeps his neck long.

Dressage Dynami llustration courtesy, Sandy Rabinowitz; Photo courtesy, When Two Spines

Exercise 1: Shoulder-fore

/alk straight into a mirror or have a friend or instructor stand directly in front of you as you walk straight toward him. Your friend doesn't even need to be experienced. He just needs to give you feedback or video your horse walking on a straight line.

- 1. Flex your horse very slightly to the right (inside) and establish a connection between your inside leg to your outside rein.
- 2. Ask your horse to step with his inside (right) hind foot

- between the tracks of the two front feet.
- 3. The outside (left) hind foot should be invisible because it steps in the same track as the left fore.

This may feel ridiculously difficult, but persist quietly. When you figure out how to do this, your horse will help you maintain it because he likes to be balanced at least as much as you do. Change directions and ride shoulder-fore left. Next do it in trot and in canter.

Exercise 2: Half Halts and Transitions

n this exercise, not only will you be doing half halts and transitions, you will be doing them in the shoulderfore that you practiced in Exercise 1 and that you try to maintain in all your work.

Plan to do transitions at predictable places such as A, B, C and E or R, S, V and P.

Your horse will start to anticipate the transition and he will also start to anticipate your suggestions as to how he does his transitions. Start with trot-walk-trot transitions.

1. Begin in trot and start your half halts three to five strides before you actually want to do your transition to walk. Half halt like this: Stop following with your hands. Fix them and push with your seat and legs into your fixed hands. If that doesn't work, close your fist and push into your fixed hand. Do it three to five times before you want your transition. Don't let your horse drop out from

- underneath you and quit before you get to the letter. At the letter, walk.
- 2. Analyze: Did he keep trotting with his hind legs with the same amount of energy during your half halts? Did he stay connected through the topline or did his shoulders drop? Stay in shoulder-fore and persist. This may not be something you can do well in a day, but it is worth persisting.
- 3. Next, ask for an upward transition to trot. Be aware that he will want to start with the front legs. Ask him to start with the hind legs, which will have the effect of lifting the forehand.
- 4. Analyze: Did he move off with his whole body, or did

the forehand initiate the transition?



Beth Baumert operates Cloverlea Dressage LLC, where she trains horses and riders from Training Level through Grand Prix in Columbia, Connecticut, and Loxahatchee, Florida. She is a USDF Certified Instructor and an "L" program graduate with distinction of the USDF judging program. Baumert is the author of When Two Spines Align: Dressage Dynamics, released in 2014 by Trafalgar Square Books. She is the technical editor for Dressage Today and president/CEO of The Dressage Foundation.

of gravity. Exercise 2 will improve the effectiveness of your transitions.

Lateral Balance

The balance of horses are also laterally challenged not only because they are inclined to be either left- or right-sided in the same way that people are either right- or left-handed. Also, horses are anatomically wider in the hindquarters than they are in the forehand (see photo at right). The horse's wide hindquarters thrust his weight onto the forehand. Those wide hindquarters also mean he can't track straight. As the horse moves on a straight line down the track, the inside hind leg is, without the help of an educated rider, traveling on a track of its own, closer to the inside of the arena than it should be. Because of the horse's natural left- or right-handed (hoofed) situation, this is even more often the case when the horse is tracking right. Not only is the right hind leg not carrying its share of weight, the thrust of the right hind leg sends the horse's shoulders off to the left, making the horse heavy in the left rein.

Horses are completely unable to fix this situation on their own. When they are well-educated, they can easily be straightened by an educated rider because they understand, but the horse will never volunteer to be straight. He needs the rider's help.

The Solution: It's the rider's first job to narrow the track of the inside hind so that it tracks behind the inside fore and then to further narrow it (to the left in this case in which the horse is tracking right) until it steps in the space between the horse's front feet, which is ideally underneath the rider's and the horse's aligned center of gravity. As the horse narrows the inside

By nature, the horse is wider in his hips than he is in the shoulders. Left to his own devices, the horse's wide thrust from behind is inclined to throw his weight onto the forehand. Under saddle, the rider can help her horse step under his center of gravity by narrowing the hind legs in shoulder-fore.

> hind leg to the left, it will, of course, be his inclination to accommodate with the outside hind by moving it to the left also, but you want that hind leg to continue tracking behind the outside hind to help carry the weight on the outside.

> This positioning of the horse is called shoulder-fore, which is not exactly an exercise. It is the way the rider should always help the horse carry himself. The rider uses inside leg to outside rein with a guarding outside leg that prevents the

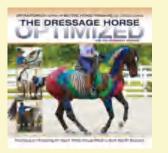
haunches from stepping out. Riding in shoulder-fore is simply riding straight, and you want to do that all the time.

Try the exercises on page 40 and be patient but persistent. Enjoy the process because this balancing challenge is nothing like putting your car in drive and then applying the brake. It's a lot harder than that. Help your horse to coordinate himself and your reward will be a healthy, sound, happy horse that has many useful years.

erformance Equine Bodywork

Using Masterson Method techniques to find and release tension in your horse's body

By Jim Masterson • Photos courtesy Trafalgar Square Books



The Masterson Method is an innovative form of bodywork that relaxes the horse and relieves his body—including muscles and connective tissue—of deep stress and pain. In Jim Masterson's new book, The Dressage Horse Optimized, he explains how through gentle and light manipulation of targeted release points and studied observation of the horse's responses, we can open doors

to improved health and performance while enhancing communication along the way. The following excerpt focuses on a powerful bodywork system that riders and owners can learn to do themselves from the ground in order to help keep their equine partner's musculoskeletal system healthy. Used with permission from Trafalgar Square Books. The book is available from www. EquineNetworkStore.com.

asterson Method Bodywork is designed to meet the needs of the equine athlete. Body suppleness and the forward reach of the legs—medially (toward the middle of the body) and laterally (outward)—are compromised when range of motion of the skeleton is restricted. Range of motion of the joints becomes restricted when muscles become tight and lose their natural ability to contract fully and relax fully. When a joint is restricted by excessive muscle tension too long, permanent damage can occur to the joint.

In general, tension develops in the muscles over time merely due to the effort it takes to do the work our horses do for us. Additionally, learning a new skill or movement calls for developing new states of balance, new motion coordination and strength in new muscle complexes. This further challenges the musculoskeletal system and can build tension in the muscles.

When tension builds unevenly in the body, torque can be put on the skeleton, which further limits the horse's flexibility. Unnatural tension in the muscles puts

unnatural levels of tension on the tendons that connect muscle to bone. Tendon injury is one of the most common career-limiting soft-tissue injuries. The principles and techniques employed in the Masterson Method focus on releasing tension from the muscles and soft tissue and restoring range of motion to the joints. These techniques can go a long way toward maintaining or restoring suppleness and flexibility in the body and reach of the legs.

Finding and Releasing Tension

When feeling threatened by something in the environment, the horse is hardwired to run away first and ask questions later. For millennia, his survival has been dependent on life in the protection of the herd. Consequently, horses try not to show discomfort in their bodies. They hide it until lameness or sickness develops that they can no longer conceal. This is especially true in what we commonly refer to as stoic horses: It isn't that stoic horses don't feel the discomfort. Indeed, they may be more sensitive than average. They just try harder not to show the pain or weakness. To show weakness means to likely be cast out of the herd. The predators are alert, always looking for a sign of weakness they can attack. This tendency to hide discomfort can complicate diagnosis of performance issues.

Bracing and Body Language

With the Masterson Method you discover areas of discomfort or tightness in the horse by observing subtle changes in the horse's body language (often merely the blink of his eyes) during the bodywork. As you are running your hand lightly over the body or moving a part of the body, such as the leg or neck, through a range of motion while it's in a relaxed state and you observe the horse blink, it means that the horse's body is telling you there is something there that the horse needs help with.

Obviously, if you use more pressure you might elicit bigger reactions such as flinching or pulling away, in an area where the horse is extremely sore. But by learning to observe subtler changes in the horse's behavior, you can determine both where there is discomfort from tension and when the horse has released it. Neurologically, he can't stop his eye from blinking when you get near an area of special discomfort if you are using a level of pressure that he can't brace against. With experience, you learn to recognize the blink from pain as different from the blink from a fly or other natural reasons. Even a stoic horse can't avoid releasing his tension secrets to a watchful observer. By applying similar techniques that follow subtle changes in body language and staying under the horse's bracing response, you can get him to release deep-seated tension on his own.

Staying Under the Radar

If you have hurt your arm and you go to the doctor, you are going to naturally tense against his manipulation of your arm as he examines it. If a nurse gives you a shot, you have to fight against the natural reaction to tense against the insertion of the needle, even though you know that it will hurt more if you tight-

en the muscle. So it is with the horse. In this case, staying under the radar means that the techniques of the Masterson Method are performed in such a way that the horse can't brace against them. This requires feel and skill that take some time and practice to develop, but if you begin with the basics, you can get results immediately.

Naturally, horses are most likely to brace against a technique when it involves an area of discomfort. For example, every horse owner knows how touchy a horse can be about the poll. This is an instinctive protective reaction due to the typically high level of uncomfortable tension that is in the region of the poll. In the performance of any Masterson Method technique, you must feel when the horse is about to brace or pull back and soften, before the bracing response happens. This is the principle of nonresistance.

The Principle of Nonresistance

The Masterson Method comprises two basic categories of techniques:

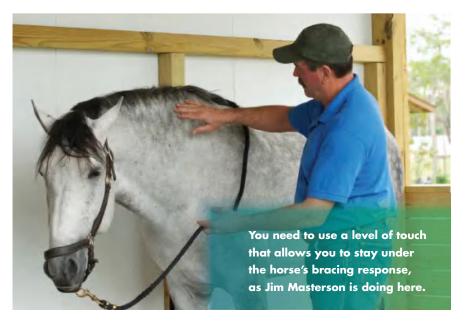
- 1. Those that release tension in situ (without movement) (see Photo A, p. 44).
- 2. Those that release tension through

range of motion while in a relaxed state (see Photo B, p. 44).

Releasing tension in the muscles and restoring flexibility and range of motion to the skeleton both work together. By simply relieving tension in the major muscles that control a joint you allow the joint to operate more freely. Asking for movement of a limb or body part while it's in a relaxed state can release even more tension in the muscles and soft tissue that control that area of the body. The manipulations that release this muscle tension give the feel that they grease the joint, further freeing the joint itself.

Some experts say the natural operation of the body's hyaluronic-acid pump in the cells of the tissue lining the inside of the joint requires normal range of motion of the joint in order to work properly. The natural hyaluronic pump removes old lubricant and secretes fresh. Since hyaluronic acid is a major lubricator of joints, maintaining range of motion of the joints can help preserve the body's natural skeletal- and cartilage-protective systems.

Whether you are using a technique to release tension in situ or to restore range of motion, how you ask the horse





B This technique releases tension through range of motion while the horse is relaxed.

is fundamental to the success of these techniques. If you ask by using too much pressure or moving too fast, the horse will brace—either externally or internally—against the technique. If the horse is not in a relaxed state when you ask for movement of a limb there is likely to be bracing against the movement and tension is generated.

"Ask" is the key word here. We invite the horse to release tension. We can't make him relax a muscle. We invite him to move a limb using a technique that will ultimately release tension. We never demand the movement. The use of force or thrust could potentially cause damage and is strictly reserved for trained veterinary chiropractors.

Until he's experienced the method, the horse doesn't know he will feel better soon. He only knows he is tight and uncomfortable now and he doesn't want to have you invading that protected spot. He wants to guard the area and not let a possible predator know there is an area of weakness. And certainly, man is the ultimate predator. We have hands that grasp and are easily hard and our movements are typically fast. The horse can feel when your hand near his body is hard and stiff or soft and relaxed. And it matters in the bodywork.

This doesn't mean we don't use pressure with this method. We do use pressure with some techniques, but the key is to yield when the horse yields and soften when the horse softens, for the horse releases tension when we are under his bracing response.

For example, when you ask the horse to bend his nose toward you, and he resists because the muscles of the poll and neck are tight, your first impulse is to pull harder to make him bend toward you. If you react to the resistance by countering it, the horse will continue to resist, tense or brace. He may still be bringing his head toward you, but he is still, to some degree, resisting, tensing or bracing as he's moving. You cannot force a horse to relax. Only the horse can relax himself. It is counterproductive to get into a wrestling match with a 1,200-pound animal with enormous strength. The horse has to let us help him.

The principle of nonresistance in the Masterson Method Bodywork teaches that when the horse resists, soften your hand(s) slightly (see Photos 1A and 1B, p. 45). When the horse feels you stop pulling, he will stop pulling and you can continue the movement. When you give the horse nothing to resist, he will

stop resisting and you can immediately continue on with your move. You must train yourself to feel the horse brace and immediately soften, which means stop asking for the technique, wait until you feel him relax, then continue on with the "ask" for the movement.

Getting the Horse to Yield to You In a Relaxed State

- 1. When you ask for any movement, start with the slightest amount of pressure, gradually increasing the amount with each "ask" (see Photo 2A, p. 45).
- 2. When you sense the horse yielding the slightest bit (even thinking of shifting his weight, for example), yield immediately, then ask again right away (see Photo 2B, p. 45).
- 3. Repeat asking by using this process until the horse is yielding to you with almost no pressure from you or resistance from him (see Photo 2C, p. 45).

If the horse resists, you can gradually increase the pressure when first asking, but you must soften or yield the instant you feel any yielding from him. Remember, start with the softest feel possible and yield at the very first sign of the horse yielding. Often, the harder you push, the harder the horse pushes back, which is the principle of nonresistance





When the horse tenses and braces, raising his head or fidgeting, soften your hands and yield (A). When the horse relaxes, you can continue with the movement (B).

in reverse. Timing is key here. Many of you riders will recognize that you might already use this principle when riding.

If there is an injury or excessive pain in an area, causing the horse to resist doing any techniques that ask for movement, he will continue to resist in order to protect the area. In any case, whenever you meet resistance, soften. In this way, you run little risk of aggravating a hidden injury.

Relaxed State vs. Active State

Under the pressure of training when being ridden, the horse, in his effort to

please, can show reasonable length of stride or range of motion of the legs. On the other hand, we can take the same horse and ask for range of motion

of the legs (in a relaxed state) from the ground and find that it is actually difficult for him to release the limb forward, backward or to the side. This is a horse who could be overpowering his muscle tension under the demand





The three steps to getting the horse to yield to you while in a relaxed state: 1) Ask (A). 2) When the horse yields the slightest bit, soften (B). 3) Repeat: Ask, yield, soften, ask (C).

of the work and his eagerness to please and he is straining against himself in his training sessions. Moving the limb, muscle or joint through a range of motion while it's in a relaxed state during bodywork releases the tension and



The way you learn levels of pressure and the responses are through search (A), response (B), stay (C and D) and release (E).

restriction in the muscle and connective tissue of the joint. More important than the amount of movement is the amount of relaxation. The relaxation in the movement is what releases tension in the tissue.

Levels of Pressure

There are five levels of pressure in the Masterson Method (starting with the lightest):

- 1. Air Gap: You are not laying your hand on the horse. There is literally a gap of air between the horse and your hand. The gap can range from touching the ends of the hairs to many inches away from the body. Often, highly stressed horses or areas of particular discomfort (for example, the poll) can best be first approached using the air gap in order to stay under the bracing reflex of the horse. When some tension has released, then the horse may be able to tolerate the next level of pressure.
- 2. Egg Yolk: This is the amount of pres-





sure it takes to barely indent a raw egg yolk with your fingertip.

- **3. Grape:** The amount of pressure it takes to indent a grape.
- **4. Soft Lemon:** The amount of pressure it would take to squeeze a soft lemon.
- 5. Hard Lime: The amount of pressure it would take to squeeze a hard, unripe lime. In some cases this can be just about as hard as you can push.

You will have to become accustomed to just how light the pressure usually is when the technique entails touching the horse's body. It is a human notion that really getting into the muscles yields a better response. The horse has exquisite neurology and is exceedingly sensitive to very light touch. Softer, lighter and slower almost always yield the best results because the horse's bracing reflex





is not triggered.

When you first start doing bodywork, it is easy to misjudge how much pressure you are actually using because you are focusing on hand and body position and the details of how to do a technique. However, the level of touch you use is the single most important thing that will determine the level of success you will have. If you use too much pressure, the horse will either brace against you or block it out. In either case, there is no release of tension. When in doubt, the cardinal rule is: *Go slower. Go softer.*

The way you learn how the levels of pressure and the responses work is through Search, Response, Stay, Release (SRSR):

Search. With a soft hand in air-gap or egg-yolk pressure, slowly move along

Responses that Demonstrate Tension and Release

The horse communicates with others of his kind as well as with you through body language that is often quite subtle. The responses you look for are changes in behavior that correlate to something you are doing with your hands in the bodywork. It takes time to learn to differentiate random behaviors or behaviors caused by something other than actual responses to the bodywork. When you aren't sure the behavior is in response to something you are doing in bodywork, just repeat what you did and see if you get the same response. If you are using light enough pressure, the response is almost always repeatable, especially eye-blinking, which the horse can't really guard against. However, if you are using too much pressure or moving too fast, the horse will block out the second try.

There are two categories of responses you are looking for:

- 1) those that indicate where the tension or discomfort is and
- 2) those that indicate small or large releases of tension.

Responses telling you where the tension is. Often, you know immediately where there may be tension because the horse's body feels abnormally hard in specific areas, such as the neck or back. The horse can also tell you where tension or discomfort has accumulated in soft tissue:

- by blinking his eye when you approach the affected area with your hand or fingers (when you use almost no pressure).
- by flinching when you touch an area using hard pressure—sometimes an area that you didn't yet know was uncomfortable.
- by actually moving away from pressure.
- by threatening to bite or kick in extreme cases of discomfort or concern.

You can also feel the tightness and restriction in movement when doing a technique that calls for the movement of a limb or body part. These are natural reactions to pain, and the horse isn't being bad. To help your horse, you have to learn to manage these reactions and other evasions to the techniques while still maintaining the principle of nonresistance.

Responses telling you when tension has released. Bodylanguage responses to your bodywork that indicate the horse is



releasing tension can range from the subtlest response, such as:

- the eye softening or blinking
- a change of breathing—usually slower and deeper but sometimes faster
- twitching of lips, eyes or nostrils, which means the nervous system is processing the release
- lowering the head and neck
- drooping lower lip
- sighing
- passing gas—especially when you are working on the back end
- staring into space or zoning out.

And then there are bigger responses that indicate large, deep releases of tension such as:

- repeated yawning (see photo below)
- · rolling back the third eyelid
- snorting and sneezing
- nose running—from sinuses that are draining after release of tension in the poll.

There are other consistent behaviors or responses that, if they correlate to what you are doing, indicate that the horse has released tension:

- shifting weight from leg to leg
- dropping one hip, then the other
- licking and chewing
- reaching around to scratch his flank or hip-flexing/ stretching the trunk
- head-shaking—feeling sensation in the poll (see photo below)
- whole-body shaking
- stretching
- fidgeting.

You will need to step back from the horse frequently to give him room to feel the release, and to see what he has to

say. Horses vary in how comfortable they are releasing in public. Give him plenty of space and time for the body to feel what is going on. Step back after every technique. It's a good habit to get into.





a line just off the topline of the horse's neck (see Photo 3A, p. 46).

Response. As you go slowly along the neck, watch the horse's eye for a blink (see Photo 3B, p. 46). This tells you your hand is likely over an area of tension. If you aren't sure the horse blinked because of your action, simply run your hand very slowly and lightly across the same area again. He will blink again if it was due to tension in the area and if you haven't moved too fast or too heavily. Remember, the horse can feel if you are using a soft, relaxed hand or a stiff, hard hand. The horse will not respond to a hard hand even if it is in air gap.

Stay. Don't move your hand from the spot. Maintain no more than the same level of pressure you started with, or lighter, and stay (see Photos 3C and 3D, p. 46).

Release. Eventually, the horse will release tension in the area you have drawn his attention to with your hand (see Photo 3E, p. 46). When he does, you will see one of the release responses, often a lick and chew.

Working by Sections of the Body

Dressage horses commonly carry extra tension in the poll, behind the jaw, over the topline of the neck, in the pectoral muscles, the back, the shoulders, the lumbar and psoas muscles and the driving muscles (gluteus medius, biceps femoris and other hamstrings and the groin muscles). The limbs need extra mobility laterally, medially (inward) and forward. The thoracic sling must be free to lift. The back needs maximum flexibility longitudinally (to round and lift) and laterally (to bend). The dressage horse also needs to be able to flex the neck laterally at the poll to both sides.

You will notice that many of the techniques used in the Masterson Method will release tension in muscles directly related to specific dressage movements by following the same





Notice that the Scapula Release Technique (A) releases tension in muscles directly related to specific dressage movements, such as the half-pass (B).

movement of the area as it is performed under saddle, but during the release technique, the movement is done while the muscles are in a relaxed state.

Essentially, tension is relieved with the horse in nearly the same body positions as he is in the work that caused the tension to begin (see photos above). The Masterson Method is especially effective for dressage horses and easy for the therapist.

When tension accumulates in one area of the body, it also affects movement in other areas. For example, when tension is released in muscles surrounding the scapula by using Scapula Release Techniques, it releases tension in muscles that affect movement in the hind end, such as the longissimus dorsi muscle that attaches at one end to the vertebrae of the lower neck directly in front of the scapula, runs along each side of the back and attaches on the other end at the pelvis. So, you can see that releasing tension in this muscle affects flexibility in the

scapula, the back and the hind end.

The Horse is the Guide

Because the Masterson Method is built on the principle of nonresistance and follows the body language signals of the horse, the horse is the guide. The horse tells us everything: where to work, the level of pressure to use, which techniques to use and in what order.

Remember, the horse is like an onion: It takes time to peel away layers of stress. He can participate only so long in a single bodywork session without getting overwhelmed. Very deep or longstanding issues can take multiple sessions to release. It is important not to try to fix everything in one session. Doing regular bodywork on your horse will help you be more in tune to him as a being and your relationship with your horse will be strengthened—an excellent side benefit.

Don't miss the handy Masterson Method pull-out chart between pages 48 and 49.



Rehabbing competitive dressage horses

By Amber Heintzberger

ompetitive dressage horses are strong, powerful creatures but even the slightest injury can put them out of commission.

The stress of training can injure joints, bones and soft tissues. Horses are inquisitive and sensitive creatures, and while that makes them a joy to be around, it can also be troublesome.

When the worst-case scenario happens, it can be a long road to recovery. Rehabilitating an injury takes time, patience and sometimes a creative approach as you aim to heal the horse in both body and mind. The location and severity of the injury, your horse's rate of healing and other factors determine whether he might return to work and how long it might take.

Generally a horse's owner/rider, vet and farrier team up to determine if and when he might return to the competition ring and at what level. Perhaps you will have to change your competitive goals to something more suitable to your horse's physical capabilities or perhaps you'll go on to achieve international fame. It never hurts to err on the side of caution, but a good dose of optimism can also go a long way.

After two years of dealing with a mysterious lameness, Urbanus successfully returned to the ring with Vera Kessels-Barisone.



While Verdades is now completely normal to ride, Laura Graves admits that she has had to learn much more about bits and proper fitting after his injury.

World-class dressage horse Verdades, owned and ridden by Laura Graves, once got his head stuck in the bars of a stall and broke his jaw. Grand Prix champion, Urbanus, who was competing with Olympian Michael Barisone, developed a mysterious lameness. And rider and judge Cindy Sydnor's promising young mare, Fresca, developed laminitis with a 9-degree rotation of the coffin bone. All of these horses have returned to competition and continue to thrive.

The Risks of Curiosity

Laura Graves and Verdades have had a meteoric rise to fame in the dressage world. But before they started winning medals, Verdades, a 2002 KWPN gelding by Florett As, literally stuck his nose where it didn't belong. The consequences were dire.

"He was in a stall with the type of

stall bars that are hinged so they can be locked either up or down, but they weren't locked," recalls Graves. "It happened the summer of 2011 at a farm in Florida. It just so happened that there was a vet at the stable who witnessed the whole thing. He was able to get into the stall and sedate 'Diddy' as well as

> administer antibiotics right away."

Diddy was taken to Ocala, Florida, to be treated at a medical center. "He was put under anesthesia in order for the surgeon to stabilize the fractures with pins, rods, plates and screws. There were also wires wrapped around his teeth, much like orthodontic headgear, and the exposed metal was covered with acrylic," explains Graves. "The trauma of the surgery caused such swelling that they also stitched a length of hose up each nostril to ensure he could get adequate air." Diddy was on stall rest and Graves treated him on a very strict schedule, administering multiple medicines four to six times

became more like kite-flying!" While she was prepared to spend time shopping for different gentle bits, Graves started with Diddy's usual snaffle. "He was comfortable to wear it, and we just removed the cavesson while we hacked. He has always hacked on the buckle, so this was a good way to keep him busy without having to touch

anticipated because the hand-walking

"Once we started a little bit of actual dressage again, he would tell me when he was uncomfortable and we would stop. By early 2012 we were back to

his mouth," she says.

schooling the Prix St. Georges and were even invited to the Festival of Champions that year. It was remarkable!"

While Diddy is now completely normal to ride, Graves admits that she has had a major education in the past few years regarding bits and their proper fitting. "All of my horses go in Neue Schule [NS] bits," she says. "In Diddy's snaffle bridle, he wears an NS Demi-Anky and his double is fitted with the Lozenge Eggbutt Bradoon and Slimma Weymouth. All of the NS bits are designed to be comfortable for the horse and allow a custom fit. Making sure your bits are appropriately sitting in the horse's mouth, and in the double making sure that they are not interfering with each other is key. Every horse is different."

Diddy still has a spot in his mouth where food will get stuck that Graves has to keep very clean, but she says that it is minimal, considering the severity of his injury. "He doesn't have the straightest smile anymore either," she laughs.

Graves says Diddy has always been a very busy, curious horse, so it's a constant job keeping him out of trouble. "I tell him, 'Curiosity killed the horse!'" she laughs. "When we travel with the team now, everyone knows if you put him in a stall with flags on the front, they won't be there for long. For me, intelligent horses will always look for something to do. Sometimes you do everything you can to be safe, but freak accidents still happen."

Graves says that her best advice is to be your horse's advocate. "As owners in emergency situations, we are often surrounded by professionals who are trying their best to do their job, and it can be intimidating. But no one knows your horse better than you do. My horse is my child. If you don't understand, ask questions. If you think your horse needs more medication or less medication or just a break, say something, because he can't."

Nature as the Best Medicine

Olympic rider Michael Barisone, who is based in Long Valley, New Jersey, and Loxahatchee, Florida, took Urbanus, a KWPN gelding by Hemmingway, to Florida for his Grand Prix debut in 2013. He scored 74 percent and made lots of headlines, and then he was sick for two years. "He looked dead lame and we couldn't identify which leg," says Barisone. "It might have been Lyme or Rocky Mountain spotted fever, but he wasn't lame in a limb. It's like when you get the flu and you ache in every joint in your body. He felt like somebody flattened all four of his tires."

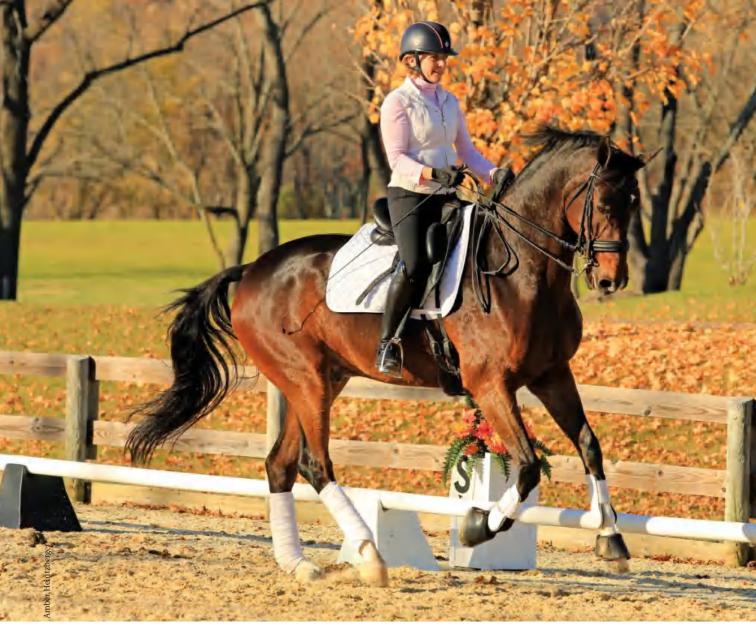
They never did figure out definitively what was wrong with him, but Urbanus returned to competition in 2015 with Barisone's wife, Vera, and scored 70 percent at Grand Prix last summer.

"Personally I think time and nature are the best medicine for a horse," says Barisone. "We didn't throw him in a 20-acre field with 2-year-olds, but we put him in a 60-by-80 paddock with a tall fence and solid footing with a good base, and let him move around, which made all the difference. I also had a chronic colicker who went to live out on grass and stopped colicking.

"Letting a horse be a horse is often the best thing for them," Barisone continues. "I don't have a veterinary degree, but I have 35 years of experience. If a horse is so unsound that I can't walk around the farm on the bit nicely—if it's that bad, I need to either turn him out or put him down. If a horse is locked inside and going crazy, it's not therapeutic. A dressage horse needs a back and a crest, and if you want to bring him back,



my K. Dragoo



you'd better keep that. Take him out and hack him. If he's locked up he'll lose his muscle tone and his cardio and become a raving maniac. Old people who break a hip and are bedridden have a high mortality rate. Physical fitness is the key to longevity. If you lose it on a horse at 13, you're not getting it back."

Barisone acknowledges that there are useful things like swimming and other therapies, but he also believes that the rider's relationship with the horse is important and that it can be maintained better with things like walking up and down hills, keeping him happy and healthy and letting nature do its job.

"There's always new technology and that's all well and good," he says. "Often

I think that a failure with horses that need to be rehabbed, though, is a lack of common sense. It's like having a relative who has cancer, and an ad for a new drug comes on. Bang, we all jump up thinking it's all going to be OK. We do it with our horses, too. Our vet tells us about the latest, greatest thing, but usually the solution is common sense. Personally, my best success is with simple stuff that made sense.

"I know a knowledgeable farrier who buys polo ponies who are 'broken,'" continues Barisone. "He has a farm in Vermont with steep hills. They'll take a trailer load of polo ponies up, turn them out barefoot, and about 80 percent of them come back in the springtime healthy and sound. Nature is a miraculous thing. I think time and common sense are the greatest healers."

That's not to say that Barisone won't try various therapies in rehabbing horses, but he currently has another horse who he hopes time and nature will heal as well as it did Urbanus. "Timeless, or Taz, the horse I'd be getting 85 percent with if he were sound, has a hitch in his gitalong," says Barisone. "We don't know if it's his back or pelvis, but we think he slipped on ice. He goes around my ring, and my assistant, Justin Hardin, can do nine tempi changes with him, but he doesn't walk evenly. I have to hope that nature's going to help him align his body again.



Michael Barisone says that time and nature were the best medicine for Urbanus.

"If it doesn't, so be it. Worst case, he gets a great retirement as a happy horse. I can't say I'm an expert, but I know that all the things I've tried haven't worked. Veterinary medicine can be wonderful, but time and nature work, too. Time's a funny thing. I've had horses come in with a fat leg, and I give them a week off. Ninety percent of the time it's better after 10 days. If it's not, then we're 10 days into his six months off."

In It for the Long Haul

When rider and judge Cindy Sydnor's 14-year-old Hanoverian mare, Fresca, foundered a couple of years ago, Sydnor knew that she needed patience and a game plan. She was no stranger to rehabbing a competition horse. More than 30 years before she had ridden a horse at Dressage at Devon for a friend of hers. When he became suddenly and extremely lame, the owner took him from Boston to the New Bolton Center in Pennsylvania, but they were unable to determine the cause of his lameness.

"He couldn't even leave the stall," recalls Sydnor. "He was in there for months—approximately six months, maybe longer. Because I'd worked with

him and shown him at Devon, and the owner knew I lived on a farm in North Carolina, she gave him to me so that I could turn him out. I tried putting him out in the pasture, but he couldn't really get around and he didn't want to leave the stall at that point."

Sydnor's vet, Dr. Richard Cochran, in Apex, North Carolina, had a look at the horse and diagnosed a fractured sesamoid bone. He did surgery, removing bone shards from the tendon that had been causing the horse excruciating pain. "He had been at Third Level, and I had him for five more years and got all the way to Intermediaire I," says Sydnor. "I don't tell the story to badmouth New Bolton at all. I'm well aware of their prestige. But it was a wonderful recovery. A lot of times with an injury like that you'd be happy with pasture soundness, but he was completely sound. He had maybe two to three weeks of stall rest, but I could hand-walk him pretty much from the beginning and gradually moved to mounted walking. Every time he had a checkup he kept passing with flying colors."

The horse was an off-the-track Thoroughbred, but they determined that the injury was from the warm-up at Devon, which Sydnor says was nothing like today's footing at the time. "I remember him hitting a rock, and he stumbled and regained himself. He wasn't lame at the time, but that's when it initiated. The footing back then was rocky clay, which was back before my children, who are now 35 and 33. The footing has greatly improved since then."

Fresca, who foundered between the age of 9 and 10, did not experience a metabolic founder. She had a chronic crack down the front of her hoof, and then managed to get a stone bruise, which triggered enough pain that she foundered in both front feet, causing a rotation of the coffin bone of 9 degrees.

The mare was treated by Dr. Becky

Scarlett, the director of the veterinary school at the University of North Carolina, in Raleigh, for many years; and Richard Mansmann, a veterinary podiatrist who lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, along with his farrier, Kurt vom Orde, who is based just 30 miles from Sydnor's farm in Snow Camp—also in North Carolina. "Of course, they started with a lameness exam, and she was quite sore," says Sydnor. "The right front is the one with the crack, and it's always looked worse, and they evaluated her sensitivity at the walk and maybe a little jogging, then used hoof testers and then did X-rays. That revealed the devastating rotation of the coffin bone.

"We drove there in the trailer and did this exam," continues Sydnor. "Dr. Mansmann and Kurt designed a special aluminum shoe with a wedge and all these fancy things, and we left there with a horse who was almost sound. Even in the X-rays taken after shoeing, the rotation was almost gone. I don't know how that can be, but I saw it myself. Actually, she just recently had a check up and there's such a difference now."

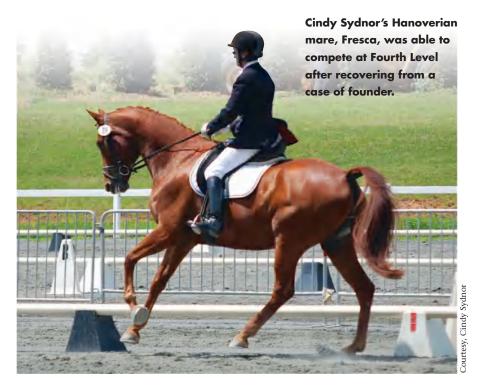
Given the pain and inflammation from the founder, Fresca had to rehab very slowly in spite of the immediate improvement. "She was feeling so much better after that, but, of course, I couldn't just start riding her," says Sydnor. "She actually went back to very, very light work: walking in hand, then mounted, then gradual riding over the next six months. Little by little, with regular shoeing, her feet began to look normal again. There was some tendency to flare, which was managed carefully, and her feet are almost normal now."

At the time that she foundered, Fresca was training and showing at Second Level. But Sydnor has continued with her training and the mare won the Fourth Level North Carolina Dressage and Combined Training Association championship in 2013. "I'm slowly

working toward the Prix St. Georges with her, and she feels good. I just keep my fingers crossed," says Sydnor, who is careful with Fresca's maintenance.

"She lives out with other horses. I do watch her weight-she gets a lowstarch, pelleted feed and a couple of supplements. Most of us have moved away from the old-fashioned sweetfeed with corn and molasses. She's not a terribly easy keeper, so she's not prone to blowing up if she has a week off. Just last week the vet measured her neck to check her crest because that can be a warning sign that she's getting too fat and might founder.

"It is frustrating, but I feel that if you get the support and encouragement honestly from your vet, there's a good prognosis for your horse," continues Sydnor. "It's kind of like a marriage—you'll





stick by your horse through thick and thin. Other than retiring them somewhere, you can't just get rid of them, and I love them even when I can't ride them. Luckily, we have this great farm with good pastures."

Like Barisone, Sydnor feels that a natural environment helps promote healing in horses. "What I can't tolerate, and never will, is that with a lot of injuries this incredibly protracted stall rest is prescribed. I've lived through caring for a couple of horses with minor suspensory injuries in my life—one of them is mine—and I still turn them out. I understand there are scenarios where you do have to keep the horse contained, like the horse with the fractured sesamoid. But a horse doesn't understand why he needs to be confined for six to nine months. It's bad for every other system

in his body and it drives him to hurting himself or practically killing himself."

Sydnor feels that the tides are changing in recommending stall rest for soft-tissue injury. "The vet who helped me with a horse with a modest suspensory injury recommended stall rest, and I told him I wouldn't do it because the horse would go crazy. The injury healed and healed, and the horse was perfectly fine just from being turned out. Honest to God, more often than not, the horses do fine. That's my story and I'm sticking to it! The bad news is that basically, you can be looking at a minimum of a whole year, and people don't want to hear that."

Your horse's current age and level of training may determine how much time, energy and money you actually want to invest in his recovery. He might

require stall rest, surgery or expensive therapies or maybe some simple downtime will do the trick. Sometimes turning a horse out works miracles. Sometimes it doesn't, and maybe then he'll be a pasture ornament for the rest of his life. But if you have the time and patience and access to good turnout, it could be worth a shot.

Injury and illness can be expensive and frustrating. We work hard to achieve training and competition goals and being sidelined is not part of the plan. But it can be worthwhile to keep your chin up and find a strategy that will heal your horse. Whatever the issue and whichever approach you decide to take, it is inspiring to know that these horses and others have gone against the odds and made a successful return to the show ring.





Riding with Life: Lessons from the Horse by Melanie Smith Taylor

In this comprehensive training guide, renowned Olympic gold

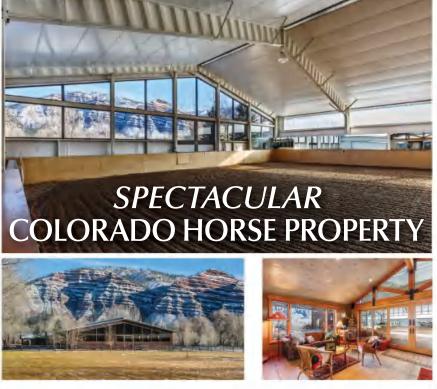
medalist Melanie Smith Taylor

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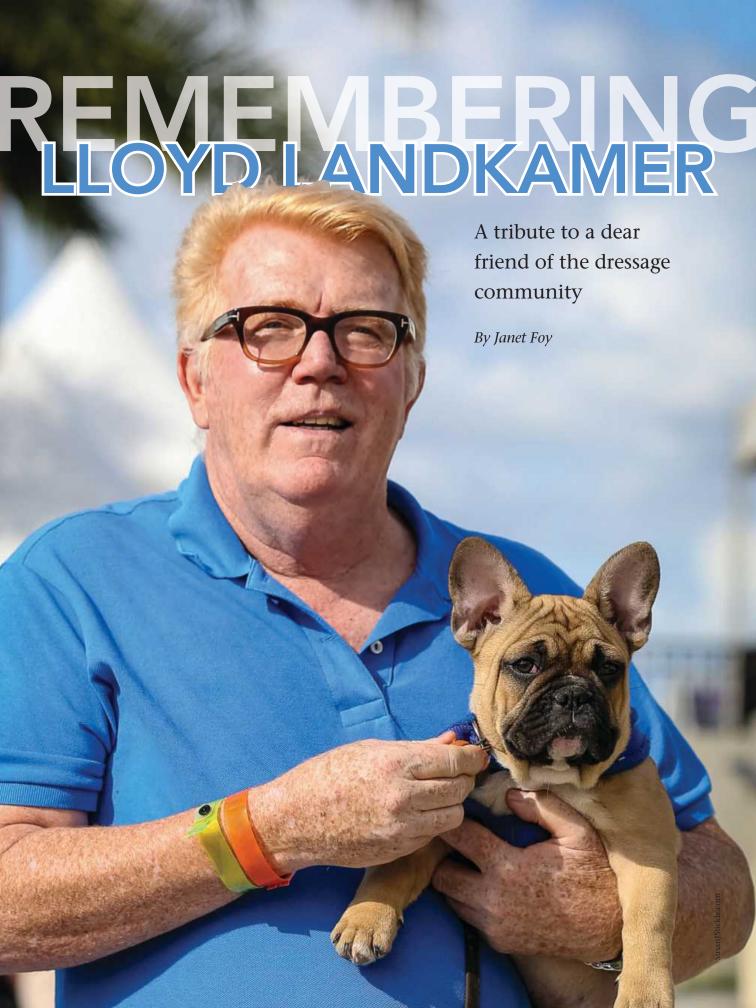
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Lloyd Landkamer, a beloved figure in the dressage community, died Sept. 25, 2015, at the age of 60, after a long battle with cancer. Although he began his career in dressage as a rider, he progressed to managing shows and eventually became competition manager at events such as the U.S. Dressage Finals in Kentucky and the Adequan Global Dressage Festival in Florida. Landkamer was a USEF "R" technical delegate and an FEI Level 3 steward. He was also discipline manager of dressage and Para-Dressage at the 2010 World Equestrian Games in Kentucky and ran DressageShowInfo.com. With partner Bill Solyntjes, he was based in Hamel, Minnesota, where they ran a small breeding operation. After Dressage Today heard of Landkamer's passing, we asked dressage professional and regular DT contributor Janet Foy, who was also a close friend of his, to share some of her favorite memories of him as a tribute.

loyd Landkamer left this earth at the end of last September. They say time heals all wounds, and that with time everything returns to normal. In the months since his passing, I have found this is not true. Memories are still fresh. I still pick up my phone to call him. I still think about him daily. This article is not meant to be an obituary to herald all of Lloyd's accomplishments, which are plentiful and amazing. Instead, this is an article about Lloyd, the person, not Lloyd the World Equestrian Games organizer. I would like to share some stories about my best friend so readers can know him better.

Lloyd was presented the USDF Lifetime Achievement Award last December, three months after his passing. The actual award was sent to his home a week prior to his death, so he did know about it. But he would have been so embarrassed at the adulation being showered upon him at the banquet. In his own way, he was shy and embarrassed easily and always felt he could do better, be better and work harder. Even though the dedication at the awards banquet was beautiful and heartfelt, sadness fills me that Lloyd was not there to receive the award in person.

Lloyd's family was his dressage friends. Those of us who considered him our best friend included myself, FEI 3* dressage judge Kristi Wysocki, USEF High Performance Dressage Committee Chair Elisabeth Williams, USDF Executive Board Vice President Lisa Gorretta the kindest, most helpful person," she said. "He gave me guidance and direction and so much support and motivation as a beginning young dressage rider and brought me up though his and Bill's training program to the Junior and Young Rider competitions. He was always there like a father figure for me, from helping me find tack to doing entries to helping me with homework."

Another Young Rider they took under their wings was Brianna Zwilling. She rode at their barn through the Young

Tremember his tremendous work ethic and his ability to draw you into the excitement of dressage —Brianna Zwilling

and USEF "R" dressage judge Janine Malone. We were possibly his longest best friends, as most of us knew him for at least 25 years. Even during the last few days of his life, Lloyd never complained about the pain. When I saw him a few weeks before he died, he was upbeat. We enjoyed a great lunch with his longtime Morgan horse-show friends. There was the occasional "pity party" as he called it, where we would hug and cry, and then it would be over and he would move on.

Lloyd was generous—with his time and with his money. He gave thoughtful and appreciated Christmas and birthday gifts. This past June, I was admiring a yellow peony in his garden. Gardening was a passion we both shared and we had often exchanged tulip bulbs, new iris and gardening tips. Two weeks after his death, three yellow peonies with a gift card from Lloyd showed up at my door.

Lloyd and his husband, Bill Solyntjes, were both very generous in their support of up-and-coming Young Riders, giving their money, time and horses. Natalie Hamilton Hinneman, now a professional in California, rode at their barn as she grew up. "Lloyd was

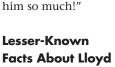
Rider ranks and is now a professional in the St. Louis, Missouri, area. "I remember his tremendous work ethic and his ability to draw you into the excitement of dressage and help provide you with the necessary tools and opportunities to reach toward your dreams," Brianna said. "My fondest memory of Lloyd was when he ran the first FEI 5* Masters in Florida. I was young and yearning to be near top professionals. So when I expressed interest in volunteering at the show, Lloyd took me on. I had one of the best spots at the show, opening and closing the arena gate during the Grand Prix, Grand Prix Special and Freestyle. What a fun experience! It was awe-inspiring to be that close and to witness what happens behind the scenes at such a top show."

Elisabeth Williams knew Lloyd through the FEI stewarding world and they worked closely together on many committees and projects for the USEF's Technical Delegate programs and forums. "He was a friend like nobody else," she said. "He was always there for us all, praised us when we deserved it; took our heads off when we deserved that, too. He was generous almost to a fault and would

give you the shirt off his back before you knew you needed a new shirt. He was so proud of his homebred horses, but only wanted fillies. He never ever banged his own drum, was always almost shy when people tried to tell him how he had done well or when he was given an award. He loved his dogs and any dog on the show grounds was 'his' dog. Only the best treats were good enough for them all. He was the most old-fashioned guy. I never really had a contract for any shows—a handshake or a quick conversation was as good as a written document to him."

Kristi Wysocki was with Lloyd a few days before he died. He still did not complain, but he was worried about his friends and about Bill, about those he would leave behind. "He was a big

brother to me," Kristi said. "I miss him more than I can say. It's breaking my heart that he is gone, but I am so grateful that he was such an important inspirational part of my life. Heaven has gained an amazing angel, and we have lost a friend. I miss him so much!"



Lloyd was a great rider. He loved riding the mares—the more opinionated, the better. He had a wonderful, soft way with them. I was sorry that he was always so busy with the horseshow-management business that he no longer had time to ride. He always said he was going to keep one of the super young horses he and Bill bred and he was going to get in shape and start riding again.

Lloyd also knew bloodlines in and

out. He pored over studbooks, and whenever anyone asked me about a stallion, I had them send the mare's papers to Lloyd. He would happily give them advice about a good cross with their mare. He always dreamed one of the horses he and Bill bred would go to the USET Festival of Champions. Last December, at the Global Dressage Festival in Wellington, Florida, Lloyd's dream came to life. Royal Gem, an Oldenburg gelding bred by Lloyd and ridden by Melissa Fladland, competed in the Small

ABOVE: (From left) Lloyd Landkamer, Natalie Lamping and Janet Foy attend the Estes Park CDI*** in Estes Park, Colorado.

LEFT: "He was a friend like nobody else," Elisabeth Williams (right) said of Lloyd.

Tour Championships.

At shows, Lloyd never came out of the show office until one of the judges forgot a score or did not sign a test or perhaps did not initial a changed score. He so enjoyed marching into the arena—with all the other judges sweating and thinking Oh no, I hope it wasn't me!—to stand in front of the offender and hand him or her the test in full public view.

Lloyd was a USDF "L" Education Program graduate. He loved education and, if I counted, he would probably be



Last December, Lloyd's dream came to life when Melissa Fladland rode Royal Gem in the Small Tour Championships at the Global Dressage Festival.

the number-one organizer of educational events in the country. Whenever the USEF Dressage Committee was presented with a problem, the answer was the same—"Lloyd can do it." And he did. Without hesitation.

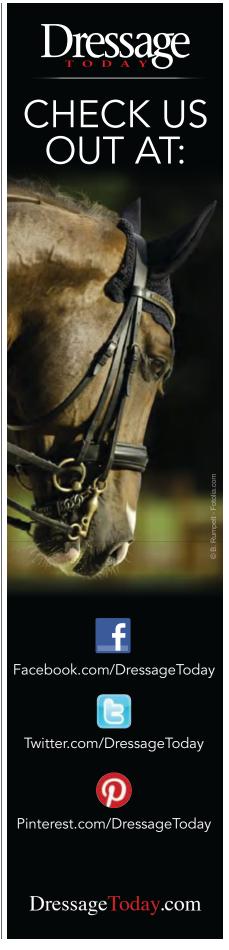
Outside of the barn, Lloyd was an amazing cook. Many memories of mine are centered in Lloyd's kitchen, which would make any gourmet cook jealous. He was always tinkering with breads, cakes and his pressure cooker. We shared many recipes, and when I went to clinics, he would always ask what dinners I would like when I was there.

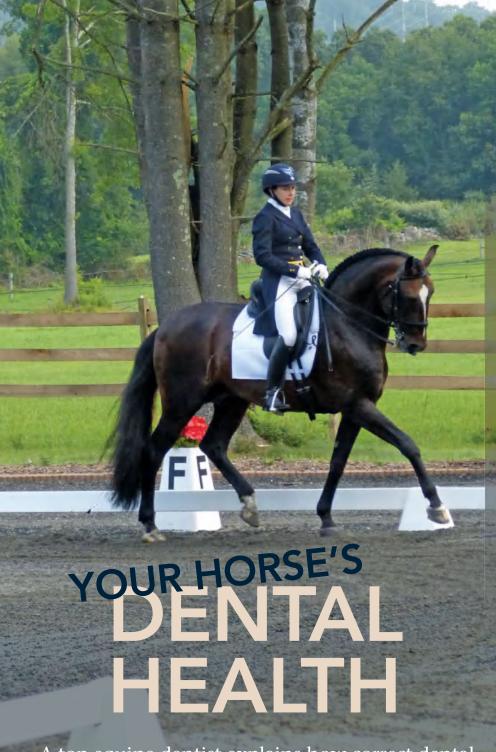
As Elisabeth mentioned, he really did love dogs. One of my first memories of Lloyd was at a show he ran in Minneapolis. I was there to judge, and it was also the birthday of his Jack Russell, Fannie Mae. Lloyd threw her a great birthday

bash and invited everyone at the show! This was one of the first competitor parties I ever remember.

When I bought my Swedish Vallhund puppy, Britta, about 16 years ago, I sent him a picture. He had such a soft heart that he could not resist, and soon a sister of my puppy was on her way to his farm. Bill often scolded me, saying "Don't send him anymore puppy pictures!"

I shared only a few stories, but I know there are many, many more. We will mourn his passing for a long time. For those of you who came in contact with Lloyd, I am sure you also have fond memories and many good stories as well. Elisabeth really summed Lloyd up best when she said, "He made us all better human beings by being such a damned fantastic guy himself."





A top equine dentist explains how correct dental work can influence throughness.

By Doug Raucher, IAED/CEqD with Annie Morris

s riders, we want the horse to be soft and supple in the mouth. As an equine dental practitioner, I can tell you the horse is only capable of giving this feeling when the jaw can move freely front to back and side to side. When you first learned to ride, you were told that the horse follows the nose. That is a simplified explanation. The horse actually follows his jaw in the bend or the turn. If you pick up the right rein and

When we ask the horse to flex his jaw and become round, if he is comfortable, he will be able to come through and travel in the most correct way possible. Here, Annie Morris rides Telurico.

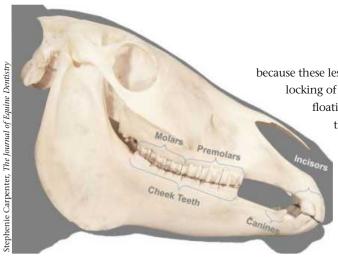
ask for bend on the right side, the horse's jaw has to be able to follow the bit and then the horse's nose turns along with the poll and the whole spine. Additionally, when we ask the horse to go into a frame and be through, the horse's jaw has to slide forward, which we call the anterior movement of the mandible. When the nose comes up, the jaw moves back. The jaw moves left and right as well as forward and backward, and, therefore, the jaw's flexibility is directly related to the horse's ability to come through the neck and the topline. How do we achieve that flexibility?

Finding the Right Dentist

Equine dentists come in all shapes and sizes. However, there are several organizations that educate, certify and promote equine dentists. I encourage riders and trainers to find an equine dentist certified in one of these programs because the quality of work is probably going to be that much better than your average dentist with two floats and a bucket and no formal education. Certified practitioners tend to be educated in anatomy and physiology of the horse and have proven their ability to actually perform dentistry on a live animal in a controlled testing situation.

Questions you can ask your current dentist or a new dentist you plan to use, include:

- Are you a member of any equine dental association? Are you certified?
- Did you attend an equine dental school? (There are three in the U.S.)
- Do you use a full-mouth speculum?
- Do you use motorized instruments?



The horse's mouth has to be balanced. When the horse is floated, the dentist removes all hooks, ramps and/or excessive ridges on the molars' surface and he balances the mouth. Besides addressing the molars, the dentist also adjusts the incisors to the proper angle.

Today's standards of dentistry are light years away from what they were 20 years ago. It all has to do with the quality of instrumentation that has been invented or reinvented over the years. There is still a place for the nonmotorized instruments, but a full-mouth speculum and motorized instruments are considered standard. However, the debate about motorized dentistry is still raging. One owner said to me that she is afraid of motorized equipment because she had heard you can do so much damage to horses' teeth in so little time. Yes, you can, but you can also do so much good in such little time. Any equipment may be used properly in an educated person's hands but can be dangerous when used improperly. Dental schools are thriving around the country and they promote state-of-the-art education and instrumentation and teach students how to properly use the equipment. With this information, a certified dentist can float the horse to allow freedom of movement in the jaw.

The Balanced Mouth

Most importantly, the horse's mouth has to be balanced. When the horse is floated, the dentist removes all hooks, ramps and/ or excessive ridges on the molars' surface because these lesions contribute to the locking of the jaw. In addition to floating the sharp points,

the dentist balances

the mouth, which means he makes all the teeth at the same crown height. In other words, if you were to look at or feel the horse's molar battery, where the molars are located, the teeth are all the same height and aligned at the proper angle. The molars that are

the same height front to back allow the horse's jaw to slide front to back and left to right more easily. If the jaw is unable to slide easily, the horse is forced to open his mouth when he wants to slide the jaw. This can contribute to connection issues while riding, such as bracing, opening the mouth and tongue problems.

Besides addressing the molars, the dentist balances the mouth by addressing the incisors, which are the teeth located in the front of the mouth. Grazing on low-quality forage wears a horse's incisors in the wild, but eating hay in a stall often requires a dentist to float them. The dentist adjusts the incisors to the proper angle, which is measured viewing the jaw from the side. Five to 10 degrees is generally accepted, but the less steep this incisor angle is, the more easily the jaw can slide front to back comfortably. Ideally, the exact angle of the incisors should be parallel to the horse's temporomandibular joint, or TMJ. If the angle of the incisors is steeper than the ideal, it catches the jaw as the horse flexes, and when he's round it causes the mouth to open since the jaw cannot slide forward properly.

When the teeth come out of contact with one another to overcome an unbalanced mouth, the constant action

puts unnecessary stress on the horse's TMJ. That pain can cause additional connection issues.

When it comes to freedom of movement in the jaw, an overly tightened flash noseband or cavesson is counterproductive to what riders want to achieve in their connection and for the performance of the horse. This is due to the fact that the tight pressure around the nose constricts the movement of the jaw front to back and left to right. If the jaw is constricted in movement and the horse is unable to open his mouth at all, what anatomically happens is the horse then braces his body to turn the head when the jaw can't fluidly move. For example, the added burden of a supertight noseband works against throughness because it doesn't allow the horse to drop his nose and be round due to the jaw not sliding comfortably forward.

Throughness, Soundness And Dentistry

If the horse's jaw can move freely, then the rest of the body can, in theory, move freely. Only if the horse is comfortable can he flex his jaw and become round and come through, therefore traveling in the most correct way possible. This is what will protect his soundness. If the horse cannot comfortably slide the jaw forward, back, left and right, he is not going to be comfortable in that position and, therefore, not be comfortable coming through the back. If he is hollow because he is protesting the difficulty of the roundness, he is upside down and likely stabbing his feet into the ground. The horse's joints are not made to take that concussion. When the horse is trapped upside down for a long period of time, you will begin to see joint problems. Of course, many different factors are involved, but in my opinion, if the horse's dentist is working for him, you will likely see fewer problems not only in the jaw, TMJ and poll, but in all joints.





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Why Is My Horse Acting Irritable?

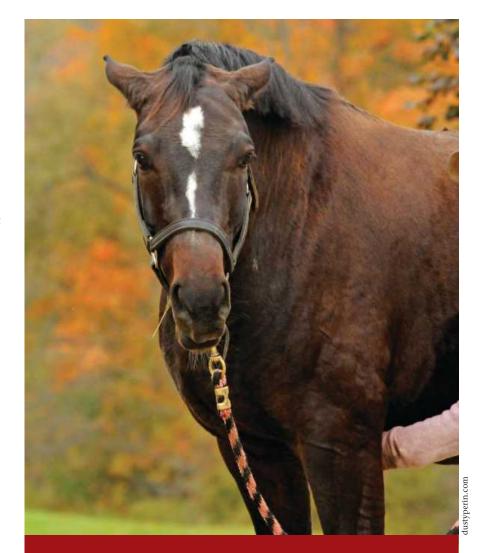
My Second Level dressage horse, a 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare, has recently been acting irritable when under saddle. It's not consistent, but when it happens, she becomes reluctant to move off my leg and will sometimes kick out. I've had the saddle fitter out and everything seems to fit fine. I'm wondering if she might have ulcers. Are there other signs that can help pinpoint why she might be acting out? Name withheld by request

EMMA HARDY, PHD

Regularity of paces, freedom of movement, responsiveness and willingness, balance and impulsion—these are attributes we all strive for in our dressage horses and are the basis of all development and progression in the arena. However, where do we turn when one or more of these are proving elusive despite correct and appropriate training? Perhaps our horse is struggling to extend and collect, is reluctant to accept the leg aids or frequently tail swishes, is finding it difficult to flex over the back, engage the hindquarters or shows negative changes in temperament.

A horse might also be reluctant to bend through his body, particularly to the right. Post mortem studies have found that the right dorsal colon is frequently the site for inflammation and ulceration. Because of the colon's anatomical location within the horse. pain, sensitivity and discomfort arising from an abnormality in the mucosal pathology can elicit the types of symptoms stated.

We could be seeing just one or two of these behaviors or all and more. Maybe it's a subtle change noticed by a sensitive rider or something more overt (enter arena at A, deposit rider at X). Regardless, the frustration of this scenario is the difficulty in pinpointing its cause. Without this, finding an effective resolution can be lengthy, expensive



Identifying a digestive disorder at an early point is crucial to our horse's welfare as it enables the most effective treatments to be selected and can shorten recovery times. Overt signs can include sensitivity to brushing or girthyness.

Emma Hardy, PhD.

has been the European marketing manager for Freedom Health LLC since joining the company in 2009. She holds a PhD in equine science from the University of Lincoln, UK, and is a member of the British Society of Animal Scientists.

and sometimes heartbreaking.

First of all, we must consider that instead of thinking our horse won't do something, maybe it's that he can't. So we book the saddler, physiotherapist and dentist. If nothing significant is identified, where this then leads can be limitless. Investigations carried out by veterinary professionals, associated professionals and alternative or complementary therapists may still lead to dead ends. However, an area that is frequently overlooked when trying to resolve training difficulties, but is implicated more often than you might expect, is the equine digestive system.

Identifying a digestive disorder at an early point is crucial for many reasons. It benefits our horse's welfare as it enables the most effective treatments to be selected and can shorten recovery times. It is also worth remembering that the digestive tract is the fuel line for all the other biological systems. Overt signs, such as loss of condition, looking tucked up, dull coat, weight loss and poor feed absorption, may all be red flags for a hindgut disturbance. The discomfort that may accompany this can manifest in sensitivity of the flanks (dislike to brushing, rugging, pressure), girthyness (frequently mistaken for gastric discomfort) and even colic-like symptoms.

Over recent years much research has been directed toward the causes, management and drug development for gastric ulcer-

ation, but comparatively little attention has been afforded to digestive disorders beyond the stomach.

Peak performance starts from the inside out, and is only truly compatible with a healthy, happy horse.

Recent research shows that these types of issues are surprisingly prevalent among our competition horses and that diagnosis can be confused, delayed or, at worst, even missed altogether.

So why are we missing hindgut problems? When it comes to medical conditions of the horse's hindgut, diagnostic techniques available to veterinarians are limited. No endoscope can safely visualize the hindgut, so our veterinarians are left with interpreting blood and biopsy results, evaluating ultrasound images, clinical signs and symptoms in order to reach a diagnosis. Furthermore, some digestive disorders can look like

others, which only compounds an already difficult task. Treatment strategies are then commenced with definitive diagnosis later confirmed (or not) by their success.

Optimizing digestive-tract health starts with understanding the horse's system. Horses are hindgut fermenters, evolved to life of low stress and a trickle-fed fiber diet. This picture seldom reflects the management and feeding regimens we need to implement for peak performance, so it's little wonder digestive-tract disturbances occur. The equine hindgut is a vast structure, designed to support bacterial fermentation of large volumes of fiber and is responsible for producing upwards of 70 percent of the horse's energy. As a result, the health of the hindgut is paramount.

If we can aim to feed and manage the horse as he has evolved to do, we can reduce the risk of digestive issues. Free access to forage meets behavioral needs but also helps to buffer the stomach's continuous secretion of gastric acid. It is already well established that an empty stomach is implicated in the development of gastric ulcers.

The horse has a limited capacity to digest starches and sugars, particularly when delivered intermittently and in large volumes. This type of diet and feeding is a perfect combination for overloading the hindgut with poorly digested feed. The subsequent bacterial inversion drives acidity in the hindgut, and further proliferation of pathogenic bacteria. Endotoxemia, colic, laminitis, colitis and ulceration are all possible outcomes, but by limiting starch and sugar and providing smaller, more frequent meals you can help to avoid this. Increasing turnout may also help limit stress and promote the horse's natural behavior, which are all beneficial to digestive-

tract health.

Nutritional support directed to the structure and function of the digestive tract may be useful particularly during

training, traveling and competing. This not only helps the horse to cope and even thrive in the face of today's feeding and management regimens but also helps to maximize feed absorption.

As owners, riders and trainers, we have a responsibility to our horses and their welfare. Education, empathy and sometimes a little lateral thinking should be our aim when our horses seem to be telling us that something isn't right. Peak performance starts from the inside out and is only truly compatible with a healthy, happy horse.

WHAT I WISH I'D KNOWN THEN

No One Can Train a Horse Alone

BY LAUREN SPRIESER

have this very vivid memory from when I was 24 years old. Clairvoya, or "Cleo," my late Hanoverian mare, was right on the brink of Grand Prix, and I just couldn't get the pieces finished. I had opened my own business two years before and was hustling, getting lessons where I could, but like every other young (and even many old!) trainers, inevitably having to dedicate more of my time and energy to my students and fledgling business. And I had called one of my heroes, Lendon Gray, because I was crushed at the idea of sending Cleo to Florida to have my coach ride her and get her over the Grand Prix hump.

Bawling into the phone, I cried, "This feels like failure. I should be able to do this on my own." Lendon was stunned. "What in the world are you talking about? No one gets there by themselves. No one goes it alone."

Firstly, going it alone means going by feel, and feel is a liar. Those who convert from the hunters and jumpers to dressage are terrific examples. How many lessons have those folks taken where their coaches tell them to sit up straight, that they're leaning forward, and the riders swear that they couldn't possibly lean back any further or they'll bang their helmet into their horse's butts until they go by a mirror? Their normal correct jumping position—upper body forward and hips behind and out of the tack—has to be reset for dressage, and for a while, their body feel will lie to them.

Horses do this, too. How many times have you been sure your horse is straight, only to see a video later and he's in clear haunches-in? And this isn't limited just to amateurs or the inexperienced. Professionals get the same lessons: that our reins are not short enough, that the trot is not quick enough, that the poll is not high enough.

I've heard some riders tell me that because

they've purchased a schoolmaster they expect the horse to teach them, to tell them when they're wrong and when they're right. The problem in that comes when that rider is wrong and she ends up untraining her nicely trained horse, sometimes very quickly. Horses aren't computers, where once they're programmed right, they never leave their program. They're constantly evolving, even in the hands of the most experienced trainers.

Being ridden every now and then by a professional can help keep a horse sharper. Regular lessons make sure that the path we're going down is the right one and that we're not being led astray by our feel. And while, yes, it's absolutely possible to push a horse too hard too fast, it's also possible to go too slowly. If it takes too long for a rider on a young horse to put the leg on and make said horse face the bridle honestly, it's combat later. If the horse doesn't understand how to use his neck and back in a round way to package himself, it's a much harder battle. If the changes aren't started by a certain time and if they're not made honestly clean fairly early on, they're a much longer and more difficult process.



Lauren Sprieser is a USDF bronze, silver and gold medalist, and is well-known for producing Grand Prix horses from the ground up, including Clairvoya, winner of the 2009 Young Rider Grand Prix at Gladstone; Victorious, fourth at the 2012 USEF Developing Grand Prix

Championships; and Ellegria, on whom she is hoping to qualify for the 2016 World Cup Final and Olympic Selection Trials. Lauren trains horses and riders from the grassroots to the international levels of both dressage and eventing from her home base in Marshall, Virginia.

Cleo went to Florida and came home a Grand Prix horse. More importantly, I came home with a toolbox of skills to apply to horses who came after her. And while it was the first time I've needed to send a horse for outside help, it certainly hasn't been the last.

Any rider who is any good should get with the best coach she can find, one who has taken people like her to the places that she wants to go whether that's the local shows, the national championships or the Olympic Games—and who not only has ridden at those levels but actually trained horses to those levels. That coach should respect that rider's life situation—her budget and the amount of time the rider has to dedicate to her sport—and help her craft a plan that makes the most of both. It is not failure. It is the way that it has to be done in order to be done right.

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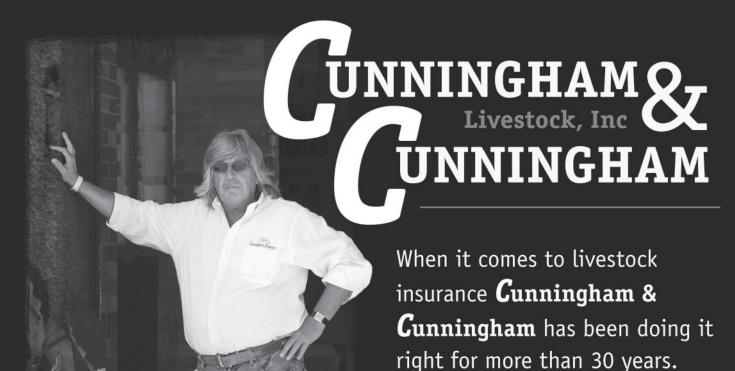








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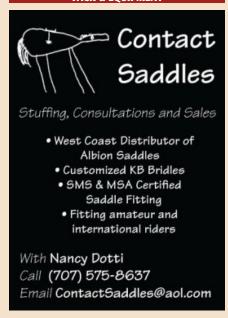
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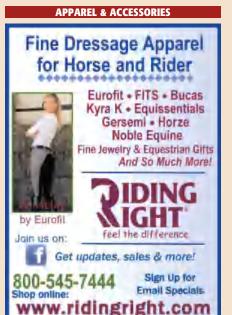
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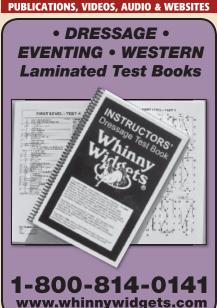
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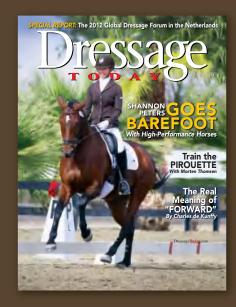
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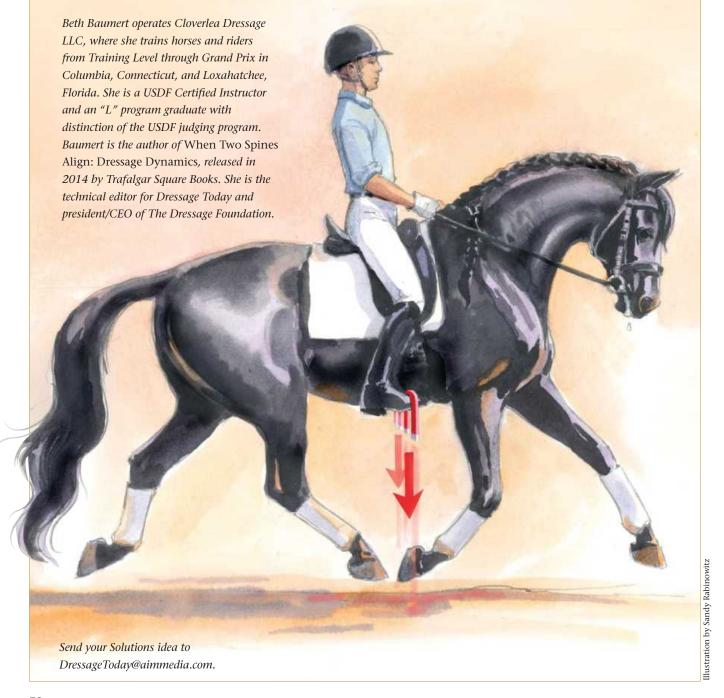
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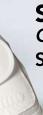
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